

# SMITH'S

MAGAZINE

OCT. 1916  
15 CENTS

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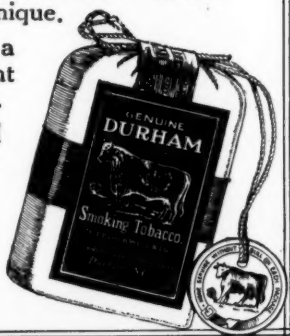
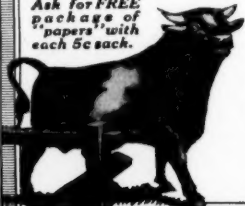
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Vol. XXIV

No. 1

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A PUBLICATION FOR THE HOME

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# SMITH'S MAGAZINE

Volume 24

OCTOBER, 1916

Number 1

## The Great Perhaps

By Marion Hill

Author of "Bridging a Distance," "Against the Wall," etc.

ILLUSTRATED BY G. C. FUGSLEY

The French have a proverb that happiness—"the great perhaps"—is found in the nest of a magpie, and so is almost always out of reach. "Julie's hair," said Shon, "is t'e badge of t'e great perhaps. Wat will be t'e experience of a Presbyter' wit' a head of hair like Julie t'e good Gôd alone knows."

### A TWO-PART STORY. PART I.

#### CHAPTER I.

**E**VEN while accepting congratulations by laughingly disclaiming them in the proper manner, Aubrey Vaughn was fully conscious of the fact that he was not the entire success that his friends declared him to be. This carking consciousness had been his from the very beginning of his career as a playwright, and was no ephemeral blossom forced into bloom by the exotic heat of the praises showered upon him during the present supper.

It was a supper of temporary farewell, in addition to being a laudatory one. For Vaughn had not cheated himself of any of the requirements of his literary and social reputation, and had consequently achieved the final reward—he had broken down. He had not broken up, mind you, but down. There is a big difference. So he said.

"State the difference, Aubrey," de-

manded Miss "Vicky" Dalroy, who was, as usual, seated beside him, though no host knew of any reason on earth *why* she should be there.

She was a handsome girl who had used the pen instead of the footlights to emancipate her from the irksome conventions. She was acquainted with all the bad words in three languages. When she ran out of bad words, she knew how to use good ones so as to get the very worst out of them. In conversation, she could use the nice, clean word "physical" in a manner calculated to make you want to pick it up with tongs and drop it into a sterilizing vat. She exercised fastidiousness chiefly in regard to what she smoked and drank.

"Yes, state the difference, Orb," seconded Carmen Clare, from that only slightly inferior post of honor, Vaughn's left-hand side.

*She* belonged there because—





Carmen Clare threw back her recklessly pretty head and laughed delightfully and delightedly.



Well, society's map is scored across by isothermal lines. These lines are felt, not seen. And it was generally taken for granted that Carmen Clare, who so grippingly portrayed slightly shelf-worn heroines, and Aubrey Vaughn, who put together the pathological plays through which those heroines riskily meandered, and Vicky Dalroy, who wrote the sex novels from which the pathological plays were masculinely compounded, all naturally belonged in the social space that represented the same degree of heat, so to speak.

"Orb," as a contraction for "Aubrey," was a typical illustration of Carmen Clare's gift of being most spiritual when she was too familiar.

Aubrey Vaughn, glass in hand, left the immediate precinct of perfumed shoulders by rising to his feet. He drew a breath that was more or less grateful, as one who gets out of the tropical compartment of a conservatory and enters the semitropical.

He was easily the best-looking man at the board, though there were one or two others who ran him close for that distinction; Gene Savage, for instance, to mention a name—Savage, New York's most feared critic. He was wont to sign his articles "Savage"—*tout court*. Those who did not know him took the signature to be a symbolistic *nom de plume*. Those who knew him told him that the signature was a waste of ink. But to go back to Vaughn. He was handsome in a way so loosely uncanonical as to satisfy the ideals of the greater part of humanity, from the bootblack who admires "form" to the schoolgirl who thinks she worships "soul." All the intermediate grades of society, those less exacting than the two extremes mentioned, readily surrendered to the charm of Vaughn's correct length, breadth, and manner. Should a captive tug the chain, Vaughn had but to smile, and hug was substituted for tug.

Aubrey Vaughn's smile was a convincing glimmer of good-fellowship. Savage said that it "got into your cracks and greased your rusty hinges." Carmen Clare said that it "relit the dead fires on the altar of a woman's heart." This was mere clever guesswork on her part, however. Vicky Dalroy said—at discouraged moments in her progress with him—that it was somewhat of the kind that "cheers, but not inebriates." And all of them were right.

He was smiling now; but smiling whimsically at the glass in his hand. He did not want it there. He was not going to propose a toast. He had taken it up mechanically. He did a great many things mechanically these fagged days and nights—especially nights.

"State the difference?" he echoed. "I wonder if I ought. Sometimes it causes as much war to state an opinion of a difference as to state a difference of opinion."

He waited very anxiously for them to laugh, and was curiously relieved when they did so, even though he knew they were decently obliged to fill up his gaps for him in just such a manner. He was aware that his words were quite meaningless, but was aware, too, that he was expected to drop an apothegm every quarter of an hour, or retire from business; and he wanted proof that he still owned animal magnetism enough to bluff his friends into thinking that he *had* said something quotable. Lacking cocaine, he needed their laughter to keep him bluffing.

"When a man breaks up," he explained, "some of his fragments fly so high that they never return; but when he breaks down, his bits are lying around him so handy that he is able to fit himself together again."

The guests, taking this to be but the sizzling fuse of some final, brilliant set piece, waited for it to flash out. When it did not, "Poor, unhappy dog, he's

broken up," criticized Savage cheerfully.

"Aubrey, is that original or did you copy it from some bad little girl's composition?" asked Vicky Dalroy, with the slugging intentness of a person who really wanted to know.

"Probably the latter," answered Vaughn regretfully. "I've adapted so many of your books, you see."

Carmen Clare threw back her recklessly pretty head and laughed delightfully and delightedly. For her, his words contained a mighty good joke. For the other young woman, they did not.

From their ferny alcove, the hidden string orchestra began one of the low, moaning, dithering, heart-aching wails that they keep for merry occasions. The waiters, grave and dignified as undertakers, leaned against columns, evidently meditating upon their heavy sins.

Vaughn looked at the glass in his hand and wondered how he had best account for it. During a brief second he thought how soothing it would be to fling the glass into the center of the table and let the others do the accounting. Then he pulled himself together and decided to last out. The evening was nearly at its end, anyhow.

"Here's to 'Shon Blue,'" he said dashingly, lifting the wine high. "I bid you drink!"

But his friends jokingly tarried, demanding explanation first.

"What is it?" asked Savage. "A new motor car or a hair tonic?" He needed both.

"Who is he?" asked Carmen Clare, making it unconsciously masculine, thus admitting her constant need of a new "live one."

"Who is she?" asked Vicky Dalroy, unconsciously making it feminine, admitting her constant dread of discovering herself to be a "dead one."

"Shon Blue is the convenient American abbreviation of 'Jean Beaulieu.'

And Jean Beaulieu is himself a convenient American abbreviation of a Frenchman, being a squat, thickset adopted son of Michigan," went on Vaughn, loyally trying to talk pictorially because it was expected of him, but suffering tortures from a realization of his unusual clumsiness.

"Then Shon's a he. You win," said Savage, paying imaginary stakes to Miss Clare.

"Not more than you do, Gene," drawled Vicky Dalroy. "Being a 'he' doesn't disqualify a human from being also an 'it.'"

"Shon is a hit; not an it," ruled Vaughn. "He's the Little Father of Trout Fishing, and the best guide in the northern woods. In twenty-four hours, I'll be under his wing."

"Which wing?" asked Carmen. "Leave a more exact address in order that we may write to you, Orb. Right wing or left?"

"We seem to have gone back to the differences of a pinion," mused Vicky. "What are you doing, Aubrey—scratching already?"

He had put down his glass and was hunting through his pockets. He succeeded in digging up a letter. It was written in pencil on that blue-lined, flannelly, fraying kind of paper sold only at country stores.

"Smell the cheese," invited Carmen, sniffing the edge nearest her small nose.

"Shon wrote that?" asked Miss Dalroy, of the possessor.

"Shon wrote that."

"Shon writes with his toes," she then informed the others.

"Shon dips into his heart and writes," explained Vaughn.

"That the color of his heart?" asked Savage, indicating the pencil. "Pretty black, isn't it?"

"Peace, scoffing minions, that I may render unto you this fresh screed from the depths of the balsam-scented pines," exhorted Vaughn.

"He means, hush up; he wants to read his smelly letter," translated the authoress. "There! I've procured peace for you. Now hit the trail, Aubrey."

"Sornac, mich,  
"wesdy, Mai.

"MY BEST OF FREN MR. VAUGHN; The feesh is biting tam good on most hevry color fly and Im certaine offil glad to know you will be here in two or tree days and yes indeed I will meet you at the railroad depot, if I can borrow a horse off someone I know. Yours is a tam fine idea to bring along whiskey. The nights is offil cold still. Me I don't use dry flies but that makes equal. Bring what you yourself most use. Now no more sins I see you so soon

"Your all faithful guide and fren,

"JEAN.

"I forgot to say Julie she is grow hup."

"What's that last?" asked Vicky Dalroy, with a studied languor that showed her to be sharply interested. "Who's Julie?"

"I, too, am seeking for information," admitted Vaughn. "I have bunked it with Shon Blue year after year, and know that he is his own housekeeper. Julie may be a pup or a bird or a colt."

"Or a grapevine," murmured Savage. "They're the devil for growing up. And twining."

"Julie is a girl," decided Miss Dalroy, throwing down the letter, after taking it from Vaughn to investigate the postscript.

"In that case, I start at once," said Vaughn, adroitly hinting to be permitted to leave.

"If Julie is a girl, *how* did she grow up without my help?" pensively inquired Gene Savage.

"Much better than with it," answered Vicky Dalroy, frankly touching on Gene's weak spot. "Much better."

"We didn't drink Shon Blue's health," remembered Gene, reaching for his wine.

"To Shon Blue and the dry flies," said Aubrey Vaughn.

"To Shon Blue and—the live bait," said Savage, drinking heartily.

The supper eventually suppered itself out. The orchestra and the orchids were the first to wilt and to lose their strength. The electric lights blazed higher because of half of New York being in bed; and the wine ran lower because of the other half being still up. Out in the perpetually noisy street, the trucks of the Wednesday-morning milk men began to impede the traffic of the Tuesday-evening revelers, showing that a new day had practically dawned.

"When there is no moral significance tacked to it, I find nothing particularly offensive about the dawning of a new day," yawned Gene Savage, drawing on his gloves.

The party stood under the street awning of the café, awaiting their limousines.

"Am I to have a visit with you before you go, Aubrey?" asked Miss Dalroy, infusing a vibratory tenderness into her voice.

"You *are* having one," he answered, laughing. The night air had braced him like a shower bath, and his tone was artlessly unsentimental. "One hour more sees me snoozing in a Pullman."

"I wanted to talk with you a little more in regard to the new play," said Vick. "But I can write to you about it, Aubrey. Sarnoc, did you say?"

"Sarnoc it is—or has been, for it is distinctly a has-been. But I shall be miles from a post office!"

"You might as well have said, 'Thank God!' outright, Orb," noticed Miss Clare sweetly. "Good night, everybody."

Her car was there, and she stepped to it, Vaughn assisting her in.

"Good-by, boy," she said to him, almost in a whisper. "Don't forget that my part in the new play is to make my fortune. *This* is to help you remember."

She pressed a gold locket into his surprised hand, closed his too frank fingers over it, and drove off, leaving him staring rather wildly at his good fortune—for her miniatures face smiled from his palm.

"How much did she tip you?" gently asked Gene. "Enough?"

"Too much, I wager," answered Miss Dalroy. "It would be just like her—her generosity. She has a very giving disposition—with men."

"Box Vicky in, Vaughn! For the Lord's sake, box Vicky in!" begged Gene, when her car snailed to a stop.

Again Vaughn did the polite, and again received a reward that exceeded his expectations, desires, and needs. This time it was tears, real tears, two drops of which rare fluid stood in Miss Vicky Dalroy's beautiful big eyes.

"Hurry back to us, Aubrey. We're going to miss you terribly," she said, smiling at him mistily. Then the glitter of brine and of diamonds bowled from sight.

A second time staggered by excessive good fortune, Aubrey Vaughn glanced quite weakly at the highly experienced Gene, as if demanding a bit of medicinal comment.

What he received from him was a quotation from Savage's favorite poet after Oscar Wilde:

"Perchance my dog will whine in vain  
Till fed by stranger hand;  
And then, when I come home again,  
Will tear me where I stand!"

"What do you mean by that?" demanded Aubrey, more or less unpacificaly.

"I'm afraid to tell," promptly replied Gene, moving off. "Ask Julie. Maybe she'll know how. Remember, she is grow up."

## CHAPTER II.

Some thirty hours afterward, Vaughn, who had switched from a Pullman on a mile-a-minute limited to

a yellow caboose on a once-a-week-if-it-doesn't-rain, jumped thankfully from the rattling latter to the also rattling platform of a little wooden depot, which had stood so long it had forgotten how to fall down. Had it fallen down, it would have knocked a piece out of the United States, for the depot was Sarnoc, and Sarnoc was the depot. Everything else was trees, breeze, and sunshine.

The townsfolk were represented by the station agent, who quite reverently handled Vaughn's elegant luggage, and a dancing, hairy, squat man who was clothed so as to be a splendid imitation of a moth-eaten cinnamon bear. And the early May morning was cold enough in that north latitude to make his old brown furs a comfort to the spirit, if a blight to the eye.

"Aha!" fiercely growled this ogre, grappling Vaughn around the flattered middle. "I see you again, by gar!"

"And I feel you again, you bully old orang-utan," sang Vaughn, unwinding a paw and shaking it nearly off. "How does the world treat you, Shon Blue? How does the world treat you?"

"How ot'er t'an as I treat it, fr'en'? Sometime' grand; sometime' t'e ver' devil. Yes? No? Now you."

"Same here!" roared Vaughn, clapping him on the back without making a dent. That clap would have sent Gene Savage into the first gutter. "Man, but it's good to open my mouth and talk without thinking!"

"Bah! Aubree, how young you keep! Mebbe later you learn to shut you' mout' and t'ink wit'out talking."

"Never, never, never!" swore Vaughn, insensately glad at being called young. The last few months he had been uneasily arriving at the opinion that, although he was not as old as he sometimes felt, he nevertheless was not as young as he sometimes looked.

Meanwhile, Shon Blue hurled him-

self on the luggage and trotted it to a near-by buckboard, an ancient vehicle so underslung as to travel like a dachshund—half of its vitals scraping the ground. The horse, from its color and mangy texture, might have been the mythological mother of the cinnamon bear, but it still could go, as evidenced by the exhilarating speed with which it was soon jerking its freight—human and leather—up and down the mountainous forest roads.

As they jounced along, one silent platoon of trees after another wheeled and passed them, making the popular cry of "conservation" seem more or less of a jest. The streets of New York had been so lively with flowers for fully two months that Vaughn was surprised to see here nothing but

the tender greens of very early spring. Only pale-blue hepatica and frail white trillium dotted the woodlands; mere shy ghosts of flowers, most of them hiding around tree trunks, or peeping up from behind barricades of fallen logs.

The wetness of the winter thaw had not yet soaked down out of sight, and there were plenty of bogs and swampy places and trickling springs and brawling brooks; all telling of a fresh, wild existence that as yet was safe and sound from the corruption of Fifth Avenue style and Press Club wit.

Whenever an ascent came out upon



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a clearing, affording a wide view, it disclosed the sparkle of cold lakes and the evidences of a very mild lumber industry, necessitating a few hutlike houses, each of which took the sensible measure of being at least three miles from the next house.

Then Bucephalus would gallop down into a new thicket and the offensive signs of man would gratefully fade away. Shon Blue, who never bothered to hold the reins in his hands so long as his neck or his knee could drive for him, sampled cigars and whisky, told a few believable fish stories and a



few unbelievable ones, swore queer oaths, swopped logic, and gave neither his horse nor his guest one bored minute from the depot to the log lodge in the heart of the silent forest that was his chosen home.

"Not a nail different, by Jove!" declared Vaughn, after he and his host had dumped their belongings upon the convenient wooden table in the center of the echoing, empty living room, and he was wandering comfortably about, renewing acquaintanceship.

Queer, how we invariably feel that after *we* have gone, the things we leave behind will crumble away of ennui; and the strange surprise it is to come back and discover that they haven't done anything of the sort!

"Sure. No differ' whatev' on t'is floor," said Shon Blue soothingly. He kicked open an inner door as the sole preparation necessary to render Vaughn's usual room habitable. "But, by gar, t'e room above"—here he nodded his shaggy head in the general direction of an open stairway leading, like a superior chicken run, to the attic—"t'at is all swep', wash', and fix' hup for Julie." He shrugged his shoulders resignedly.

"Now, now to sit, or never, by the side of the pale, cold moon," quoted Vaughn, administering the line to himself as a sort of iron pill for a weak constitution. "Shon, who is Julie?"

"Bah, Aubree-ee!" groaned Shon. "I tol' you five year ago and show you her pigshure."

And that was extremely likely, for Vaughn had comfortably slept through more than one of Shon's midnight recitals, just waking up enough to grunt and keep Shon going.

This time the cinnamon bear spoke to a more lively listener. As the two men leisurely sorted over their fishing paraphernalia, straightening new leaders and soaking old ones, trading flies, and doing a hundred other fas-

cinating what-nots in a good, thick cloud of pipe smoke, Shon Blue touched again on the one brief romance of his lonely life. The whole was comprised in three faded clippings from a Montreal paper. One told of his marriage with a certain eighteen-year-old Flora McNair. The second told of the birth of a daughter—who was Julie. The third told of the death of Flora, beloved wife of Jean Beaulieu; Edinburgh papers please copy. It was not much of a tale to hear, but from the look on Shon's face and the growling quavers in his voice, it had been a sufficient tragedy to live.

He had never married again, but had gone back to these his native woods, and had learned from the calm of the wilderness how to forget without disloyalty and to remember without pain. The child Julie had been reared, first as pupil, then as teacher, in a little village boarding school on the Canadian side.

"And now it henter her head it is her duty to be here to take care of me. Take care of *me*!" Shon Blue hugged his hairy self and indulged in a silent, shaking laugh. Then he sternly came to and, leveling a dangerous forefinger at Vaughn, remarked, "It is a tam hard t'ing to begin hact like a fat'er at fort'-nine year, by gar!"

"Aren't you afraid she'll hear you?" murmured Vaughn, with a nervous jab of his elbow toward the attic flight.

"You t'ink Julie, she is t'e kind to stay in a house?" asked Shon. "*Aha!*"

With this last snorting yelp of characterization, Shon erased Julie from the slate of present affairs, and began to figure on what provisions they had better take with them for the day's trip. It might be a week's trip. All depended upon the luck to be found along that point of the compass. If plenty, fine! If none, they could come back and try another setting-out.

And before long they were fairly on



their way, following a rocky trail of descent to the bank of the river where the canoe was. The breeze was fresh and stiff. The air was sweet. Vaughn felt that a month of it would clear the cobwebs from his brain. He did not want to see a book or a pen in all that time. The purling of the near water was better music to his ears than even the great Elman's bow could make. And mighty good to his feet was the feel of the soft old earth, bringing no jarring crick to the tortured skull, which seems to be the sorry mission of concrete sidewalks.

Reaching the river, Shon waltzed agilely over a pile of logs to arrive at the canoe. Though built like a baby elephant, he was light on his feet as thistledown. The logs hardly shifted. Little recking of consequence, Vaughn took to them himself. Suddenly their ends rose up and they rolled over, not only tripping him and throwing him, but grinding him, as well. Rods, landing net, and commissary flew about, too. Shon turned in time to see the whole grand spill. He realized that not only was America's most promising playwright flirting with death, but that an entirely good landing net was in danger of drowning. So he saved that first. Naturally. A landing net is always a landing net; whereas an author is oftentimes a fool.

"Want a helping han', Aubree?" he then asked, frowning thoughtfully as he noted that his friend's attempts at rising were unsuccessful.

"Want two," grinned Vaughn, barely keeping back a groan. "Be a good scout, Shon, and roll this beastly side of a house off my foot, for the Lord's sake! And if there's a piece of skin left on my right hand, by George, I'll eat it!"

"So! T're!" grunted Shon, shifting the logs. "Somet'ings new for you, my fr'en', to cut t'is sort of caper. Bust not'ing? Yes? No?"

"Wait till I see," temporized Vaughn, gingerly trying his limbs when hauled to his feet. "Woof!" he then observed, and quickly sat.

Shon Blue, down on his knees, stripped boot and sock from the injured foot.

"Broken?" asked Vaughn interestedly.

"No, my poor pig of a son, but twis' ver' near off—even more bad," diagnosed Shon, who knew what he was talking about. Then, exploding severely, "My fait'! A fine fishing trip! Yes? No? By gar, t'e hend is before t'e beginning!"

"Oh, I wouldn't say that," demurred Vaughn, struggling upright again. "See, I can walk a little."

"T'en you walk t'at, little in direction of t'e house," ordered Shon grimly, "so I don' haf to *portage* you t'e whole way."

And indeed, before that near haven was reached, Vaughn, quite disabled, was enduring the considerable pain and the worse indignity of being hauled like garbage on an improvised "drag" made from a pine branch.

Then Shon shouldered him as cavalierly as the Western dead are transported—according to the best moving pictures—and dumped him back into his cabin room.

"I am not going to bed, you grandmother!" exclaimed Vaughn, trying to keep his coat and shirt, but failing.

"Mebbe no. But you going to be made ready," said Shon, hustling him into his pajama jacket and his dressing gown. "For to-night you be so stiff, you haf to be move' all in one piece, like mummy in museum. Hola! Now we bandage."

He bathed and bandaged the sprained ankle to perfection, also doctoring the skinned hand; then propped Vaughn up in a chair and left him feeling exactly as any other handsome, manly

man would feel under the same discouraging, old-maid circumstances.

"As for now, I cook us a dinner," said Shon Blue ravenously.

"You cook? Doesn't Julie do *anything*?" asked Vaughn, his own housed-in condition inclining him to be very severe with any one who took overmuch to the woods.

He was a little curious to see her, too.

"All t'e time, if she was allow," answered Shon. "But I beg of her, '*Julie, ma p'tite chatte, pour l'amour de Dieu, va-t'en! Loin de cuisine!*' Women is well enough to make shocolat and toas', but w'en true food is to be cook', permit me!"

With that he disappeared, and was heard slamming pans for three hours—or for what seemed three hours to a cripple who was already worn out by a confinement that had not really begun. But when he returned, he brought with him a full excuse in the shape of fried brown potatoes, hot biscuits, delicious coffee, and what he pathetically called "*la pauvre mère truite*," which was a "poor mother trout," fried into veritable angel food.

After both had eaten, and the chef had washed the dishes, Shon Blue got leave from the house under pretense of hunting wild duck, which classification he extended to cover his daughter as well.

Aubrey Vaughn thought he truly would go mad in the silent time that followed. There was absolutely nothing to be seen from his windows but the scaly trunks of the pine trees; their sociable undergrowth and fantastic tops were both hidden from him. Through his open door he saw nothing but the irritating litter in the living room—irritating because it could not be reached. Nor could he reach his suit case, where he kept his nerve "medicine." Shon had furnished him with a book, a pencil, and a writing pad, for the possible

entertainment of his left hand. But that sound member had gone off a sympathetic strike. Vaughn could but sit and fume and fret and chafe and swear and watch the shadows lengthen on the unscrubbed boards of his floor.

But when he finally heard a light step enter the house, lighter even than Shon's, he put aside misery for speculation. Who was it? The step entered the living room, and then was deathly quiet for several moments. To let no one fancy him asleep, he decided to "make a noise like a man," as Vicky Dalroy would have put it. The nearest he could come to that grand detonation was idiotically to clear a throat that did not need clearing.

Then came a girl's voice, low, but far carrying.

"Mr. Vaughn, this is Julie Beaulieu speaking. May I come in?"

"Oh! Well—er—" While making these additional noises like a man, he was trying to get a glimpse of himself in the high-hanging scrap of mirror, of course without succeeding; so he took chances. "Why, yes, if you will be so kind."

Then Julie entered, and, entering, took possession of his life, to pull down what did not suit her as a child reconstructs a toy, to destroy his old gods, yet ever to withhold the new, to urge him to alien endeavor without promise of reward, to fill him with the constant, grieving unrest of one who walks through the inexpressibly fair happenings of a dream, sorrowing because of the knowledge that it is a dream, yet dreading to awake.

"My father met me and told me of your accident," she said, gliding in around the door with the sideways, tilting progress of the young and abashed. "He wants me to keep cold water poured over the bandage."

"You are extremely kind," said Vaughn, taking swift note of a hundred things at once.

First, he was struck by her shy directness. From the demure clarity of "This is Julie Beaulieu speaking," to the last statement of her reason for being where she was, her words had come straight as arrows; yet she was vividly self-conscious and embarrassed, as is any gentle girl who finds herself intimately in a strange man's company.

He could not confess to feeling surprised because she was not plain, for every man expects a girl to be pretty and considers himself vaguely cheated if she be otherwise; but he was not prepared for a beauty so really startling as Julie's. She was tall and long-limbed, and she moved with a shyness that would have been awkwardness if it hadn't been grace. She had the extraordinarily fair skin of the red-headed. No one could see it, especially at the back of the neck where the hair made a V, without wanting to kiss it. She was so modest and sensitive, and that skin was so transparent, that her telltale blood often made a spectacle of her, rushing even to her forehead in a crimson tide. And her wonderful hair was at once her curse and her crown. But her scarlet mouth was her fortune. In the gory, good old days of sword and tilt, Julie Beaulieu's satiny-red lips would have placed her on any king's lap she had taken a fancy to.

Vaughn wondered if any other young woman could have worn Julie's present costume and weathered through it alive. It was a clumsy skirt of coarse, dark cloth and a man's blue flannel outing shirt, worn over the belt, loose, like the blouse of a French errand boy. Her stout boots were of heavy leather. But no matter how hard they tried to hide her arched instep and slender ankle, they could not do it.

Her slim white hands were eloquent; there is no other word for them. Their every movement was as good as a speech; and when they touched, they blessed.

She took the ewer of water that Shon had placed near and poured a cooling stream over the bandaged agony of Vaughn's horribly throbbing ankle.

"I am to do that every ten minutes for the next two hours," she announced, without any more enthusiasm than Christianity required.

"I am devoutly glad to hear it," he said, according her the extra payment of one of his most alluring smiles.

He could almost imagine that she took that stock smile of his into her pink-knuckled young hands and turned it inside out, looking for the seam. He could almost imagine that, finding the seam, she returned it to him as patched and therefore unfit to be offered.

"Does the cold water relieve you to that extent?" she asked, ruthlessly probing his honesty. She stood very straight. Her black lashes were lowered proudly. Her lips were pressed together in a scarlet bow.

He saw that here was an individual upon whom his blandishments were clear waste—at present. He rather thought he would be able to do something big with them after a while. The need of the now, however, was bald truth.

"I'm in pain, and lonely," he said. "And I was glad to think you would be here."

"Oh!" she gasped, blushing hotly, like a child that had been scolded fairly and had no word to say. "I hadn't thought that you would mind being alone." Here she glanced at the pad and pencil, making them symbolize his alleged vast intellectuality, and evidently wondering *why* he was not in line with that self-satisfied bard of old whose mind to him a kingdom was. "Would you like me to bring a chair and sit with you a while? I can do it."

Refusing to heed the last four words, which seemed to hint at mere physical sitting ability rather than humane de-

sire, and conquering a society inclination to make her a verbal presentation of the idea, to see what her adroit femininity would do with it—which is the source of much pleasant modern conversation between man and woman—he resorted a second time to bald truth and said he *would* like it.

When she slanted softly out of sight, going for the chair, he reflected that it had been a wonderfully long while since he had said two consecutive straightforward things to a pretty woman. He rather thought that the habit would pay if it could be made widespread. It was easy on the gray matter, if tough on the red blood.

Of course, to be a fairly successful writer, he had had to be truthful. Nothing else goes, just now. But he had learned to do the necessary queer things with truth that the general public seems to want. For instance, he had often displayed truth standing on its head; in which position it attracted attention by the amazing wobble of its feet in the air where its brains ought to be. And he had often stripped truth of its blanket, making it fighting mad and causing it to do murder. But he had almost forgotten how to treat truth with the respect due a good friend.

### CHAPTER III.

A "Christian spirit" is the fortitude with which you expect your friends to bear their own troubles. It never seems to act as well for you as for them.

Vaughn's Christian spirit failed utterly of being able to reconcile him to his swaddled condition while an extremely lovely girl was tugging in a big wooden chair for herself.

"This is not exactly the predicament I should have chosen in which to make your acquaintance," Miss Beaulieu," he said, after she had placed the

chair and taken graceful, shy possession of it.

"Is it the predicament you would have chosen in which to make *anybody's* acquaintance?" she asked coolly.

Again she dropped her heavy lashes. But this time he was relieved to notice that she was hiding a desire to laugh. She was at that period of maidenly youthfulness when levity is a crime. What belied the really crushing arrogance of her lowered lids was the dimple that pricked in and out of her pink cheek.

At sight of the dimple, he took greater heart. A woman who has sincerity without humor makes as equally for a living bore as for a dead saint.

"After that slap, you owe me compensation," he claimed. "So please entertain me. Talk to me."

"Of anything in particular?" she asked obediently.

"How do you manage to amuse yourself in this quiet part of the world?" he asked, hoping that after such a personal "Gee up!" she would canter along for quite a while.

But her proud young personality refused to cheapen itself by confiding too easily. Though she repelled his question, it was without rudeness.

"When the weather is fit, I am outside; when it rains, I stay indoors and read."

This was an artless frankness that told absolutely nothing he could not have guessed for himself. He prickled all over with an alert sensation that he had met a creature in whose breast Nature had planted secrets that belonged in part to him also. He did not tell himself what it was he wanted from Julie Beaulieu, of the wondrously white skin and the visibly racing blood; he knew only that it was there within her, that it would be forever withholden from him if he did not fight her for it, that he might lose it even then.

"I fancy Shon Blue is rather a hard child for a daughter to manage," he next suggested. That caption ought to be worth a column.

"I see my father has been talking to you," she said, finishing the whole issue.

Aubrey Vaughn drew a breath that was in part an angry one. For a moment he felt that muscles were better than mind in dealing with this sort of a maid, and he quickened with a wish to take her and break her.

"No wonder you refuse to be interested in me, or by me," he said, glad to be able to startle her by a display of muscular words, in lieu of a brandished club, "for I am only half a man in this condition."

"That ought to make you more than ever interesting. There is such a profusion of whole men," she said politely. Then she got up and punctiliously watered his ankle.

"Now that you are up," he said, trying to feel more annoyed, "will you kindly find for me a little blue vial that is in a corner of my suit case?"

"Certainly," she answered, going to the bag he pointed out and deftly hunting through it. Her slender body was a great deal more talkative than her tongue; and her every move said that she was frightfully embarrassed at being obliged to rake through a strange man's stranger things. Every visible inch of her skin hung out a flaming red flag of delicate dismay, but she valiantly saw her task through.

As she was approaching him with the bottle, she unconsciously, but quite naturally, read its label.

"What do you take this for?" she then asked.

This new, alive voice of hers went whizzing past his ears like a shot from a gun, dispelling languor, making him deliciously dodge and get ready.

"What does anybody take anything

for, except because of a physical need?" he asked lightly.

"I am not questioning you about anybody or anything, but about yourself and this drug," she said, without raising her voice, but still making it sound like a rapid-fire gun. "I know enough about it, from reading, to be sure that you are doing wrong to take it."

"What people know from reading is of an extremely melodramatic character," he observed coolly. "True, there are some who allow this drug to become their master, but I am not one of them. I need it only occasionally."

"The fact that you think you need it at all proves that it is already your master."

"Then let me listen to my master's voice," he said, putting his hand upon the bottle that she held. He hoped for a struggle.

But she happened to be of that temperamental age when a man's touch is worse than a tomahawk's, and she at once let go, unconsciously rubbing her hand at the point of contact as if a wasp had been there.

"If you belonged to me," she said, hot with altruism, "I would wean you from that if I had to lock you in this room and stand over you for six months with a rifle."

"Wouldn't work," he said. "I'm not afraid of a rifle."

He inhaled a few restorative grains. He longed to throw his own lasso over her flying words, "if you belonged to me," and display them to her as his property by capture, to watch what blushing thing she might do to regain possession of them. Then he felt that he had better be content with the stimulation he had already produced, and not overdo things too soon.

"Think of something worse than a rifle," he urged.

But he had the chagrin of discovering that her outburst had been a thing





"I am to do this every ten minutes for the next two hours," she announced, without any more enthusiasm than Christianity required.

of humanitarian breadth, concerning drugs in general, and not him in particular.

She tidily went back and straightened his suit case, giving him opportunity to choke himself full up with cocaine if he so desired.

"This has come out of its case," she said. "Where shall I put it, if you please?"

What she was holding up was Carmen Clare's miniature.

"There is no case," he answered. The expression happened slangily to fit

his thought, and he repeated, with enjoyment: "Absolutely no case! Do you recognize her?"

Julie Beaulieu took the miniature to her chair and sat down with it, studying it.

"Do I know her?" she asked, puzzled.

"Perhaps not. She is an actress."

"But not a great one," said Miss Beaulieu promptly.

"Don't let her hear you! But what makes you say that?"

"Because her expression is trivial."



"Trivial? She's prettier than a flower bed of pansies!"

"Oh!" Julie Beaulieu colored vividly. "I spoke too quickly. I did not know that you—that she—"

"We aren't," he answered calmly. "Go right on."

"In saying she was trivial, I have said all. And it is too late for this—lady—to learn grandeur."

"Again and again, never let her hear you! But now you are mistaken. Miss Clare is very young."

"Very young?" asked Julie Beaulieu, looking more intently at the miniature, though with no apparent conviction.

"Yes, indeed. She is only twenty-six."

At this Julie broke into sudden sweet laughter, the first he had heard from her. It was an exquisite spring song of pure melody, bubbling from her like the lilting trill of a robin. When the last delightful note was conquered, she looked a trifle frightened and distinctly apologetic.

"Tell me and let me laugh, too," coaxed Vaughn gently.

"Twenty-six! *Young!*" And again Julie slipped over the edge of the rippling cascade, recovering staidness only after effort.

She had told. But he could not laugh, too. The point that had been a joke to her was a poisonous prick to him who was already three years beyond the mark she found so ludicrous. Perhaps the deepest poison of the prick lay in the fact that critics had been excusing his faults on the plea of his youth. Had their waiting time ripened, and he not known?

"How old are you, Julie?" he asked somberly.

"Eighteen on my next birthday," she answered, proudly making it as old as she could.

"If twenty-six is so bad, what's thirty?" he pursued.

"For a woman, the end," she answered.

"And for a man, the beginning," he hazarded hardily.

"Oh, no," she answered, with a decided shake of her head. "Of course, men have to grow to be thirty," gently, "but it is always a pity."

"For God's sake, sprinkle me!" he said grimly. "I need reviving."

With the coo of a pigeon, to signify sympathy, she obeyed him literally by sousing the ankle.

"I wish I had a picture of Gene Savage to show you," he mused.

"I like the name."

"Perhaps you'd like the man."

"Is he likable?"

"Ask—well, Carmen Clare."

"I'm asking you."

"Like any other executioner, he's a grand chap out of office hours."

"'Like any other—' What is he?"

"Butcher. Cold-blooded murderer. Both are said of him."

"But surely he is neither!"

"Surely. The truth your enemy speaks of you is always a lie, you know. Gene is a dramatic critic—so he says."

"A dramatic critic! What wonderful people you know!"

To one who was supposed to be running in the same class, her excluding tone was irritating.

"Two hours ago I was wonderful people myself," he reminded her.

"Two hours ago, Mr. Vaughn?"

"Yes, while I was still able to attract by vanishing. But when wonderful people allow themselves to be bandaged, as a result of their slip-ups, the wonderful does the vanishing, and mere people remain."

"You evidently think very little of 'mere people.'"

"Very little."

"Why?"

"So as to belong to the wise majority. Talking of Gene makes me

think of Vicky. I wonder what you'd think of Vicky."

"Vicky? A pet dog?"

"Not in this incarnation. Vicky is a young—I insist upon it, *young*—lady of many books."

"She has a big library?" asked Julie eagerly. "She is a great reader?"

"Great! That is, she reads a few books assiduously."

"I wonder if you know what they are!" Julie's eyes glowed with anticipation.

"Perfectly well. They're the books she wrote herself."

"She is an authoress? Is she a good one?"

"From her publisher's point of view or her Maker's? But of course there are no bulletins out on this last. From her publisher's point of view, a very good one."

"But to read her own books is no way to improve her style."

"She doesn't wish to improve her style. She wishes to inbreed it."

"You're talking nonsense to me because you don't think I can understand sense," said Julie, backing toward the door, shy and offended.

"On the contrary, I am wearily talking sense to you because you cannot understand nonsense," he answered crossly.

"Mr. Vaughn——"

She stood in the dark doorway, silhouetted against the brightness of the living room, through which the rays of the setting sun were now streaming. It seemed natural for her always to be seeking the light.

"Miss Beaulieu——"

"No; I am not clever enough for that. I would rather you called me 'Julie'—as you did before."

"Yes, Julie?"

"I only wanted to explain to you that I have lived all my life among little children and big trees; and so I am

used only to things that are very real, to things that we have to protect, and to things that we have to look up to. Perhaps I have learned to think of words and ideas in the same way."

"In what way, Julie?"

As he asked the question, he turned his head from her and looked sullenly out of his window, whence he could see the strong, straight bodies of the pines. But he well knew what she meant, even though she herself could not explain. He well knew that he, too, at eighteen had taken an oath of fealty to words that were real, to thoughts that either had to be protected or looked up to. He well knew that he now never opened his mouth or put pen to paper without discrediting his promise.

"In a way that respects them. Are you turning away your head because you want to laugh at me? I would not mind your laughing, for I know I am stupid. But I do not want to be stupid. And I do not want to be stubborn. If you were to say to me only such things as, 'Julie, open the door for me,' or, 'Julie, bring me a drink,' I would never fail you. But when you say, 'Julie, take this word of truth and twist it into a joke,' I do not even try, for I know that it should not be done."

"And if some man said to you, 'Julie, love me!' would you fail him then? Or would that be a joke?"

"It might be an impertinence, Mr. Vaughn; and—before to-day—I have had no experience with impertinence."

"Don't let your inexperience worry you," he said, smarting. "You know just what to do."

"You are in pain," she said forgivingly, "and vexed because you are unable to write. At this moment what you need most is rest. But to-morrow, if you wish it, I will read to you, or write for you."

"Julie, do you mean that?" he asked, turning his head again. "Or are you

saying it to make me suffer?" For he knew he deserved nothing less.

"I make you suffer? God forbid!" she murmured devoutly; and quite disappeared under the shock.

But this prayer of hers went to the place where the unheard ones go.

#### CHAPTER IV.

Shon and a good supper filled in the remainder of that first day. Then came a night that, to Vaughn at least, was long and restless. Sore in more ways than one, he tossed and waited for morning.

Julie, after flitting up the stairway, had been quietly lost in high air, like the exhalation of a flower. But all night long Morpheus had banged Shon against a partition. Shon Blue resembled the squire in "Locksley Hall" inasmuch as, like a dog, he hunted in dreams, emitting many a "Hoop! Hola!" to prick the lagging darkness.

For ten hours Aubrey Vaughn lay thinking of all the things he least wanted to think of, and at dawn summed the nervous result into a resolve to make his present play the best he had ever written. Since the book from which it was to be taken was Vicky Dalroy's most risqué one, the chances were all in his favor.

"Ehe! Aubree! How you find you t'is morning?" asked Shon, at sunrise, sticking his brigandish, uncombed head in at his guest's open door.

"Much less stiff, thank you."

"V'la! T'at comes of a night's fine rest."

"Stuff! It comes from constant exercise."

"Since it comes, no matter! And w'at shall your breakfast be?"

"Chocolate and toast," chose Vaughn unhesitatingly.

"Shocolat and toas'? Ha! But Julie, she is hout for a swim."

"Brrr!" shivered Vaughn, thinking

of the icy plunge in the lake. Then he thrilled with a remembrance of his own delight in just such breathless splashes. The drowning, dark descent, the buoyant rise, and then the battling strokes for shore, with the body tinglingly warm and its every dormant gift awake! "All right, Shon, bring me anything you like."

After breakfast he insisted upon his shaggy Ganymede's treating him to a very careful toilet, replacing the pajama jacket by a fine shirt and the dressing gown by a silk smoking coat. He insisted, too, upon being lifted into the general sitting room and placed before the center table, with his papers and books scattered handy. Elated by the knowledge that he was a much handsomer fellow than he had been yesterday, he awaited his promised amusements with patiently concealed impatience.

"She dries her hair," explained Shon, faring forth with a hunting knife and a belt hatchet to cut forked sticks for crutches. "To me it is a magnificent sight, flowing. But to Julie it is a disgrace until wind to her head."

Finally she came in and demurely took her secretary's seat.

"You look better this morning," she said politely.

That was the complete sum of the effect upon her of the garnishing he had done for her bedazzlement.

"The same might be said of you," he returned, forced to it in spite of himself.

For her fresh matin beauty was adorable. Only youth knows how to do it. Her hair was dry, and "wind to her head," but it breathed out the fragrance of lake water and sunshine. She wore her shapeless costume of yesterday, and the soft curves of her perfect body, touching it, threw it into lines that a sculptor would have reveled in. But marble would have been a very poor substitute for the transparent sweetness of Julie's skin.

"I am ready," she intimated, taking up the paper and pencil. That was all that she was there for.

He dictated the cast of characters; he dictated the stage setting of the first scene; he dictated the first few speeches—all before remembering that this was not his usual sophisticated stenographer.

"This is a play," he then explained.

"So I have gathered," answered Julie, her dimple pricking in and out.

"Let me see what you have done," he said, reaching out his hand for the copy.

Upon looking it over, he was surprised to find that she had observed the conventional margins and indentations.

"Where did you learn to do it?" he asked, handing back the paper.

"Before you, there was Shakespeare," she answered, wriggling a bit in her chair from the horror of so answering, but too drunk with sun to resist.

"There was. But you hardly took from *his* dictation."

"I learned by writing little plays for the girls at school."

These personalities had sent her into such flames of suffering that he compassionately went on with his dictation. In the back part of his brain—which he did not happen to be using—he quizzically wished he could see some of the schoolgirl plays of this red-headed Daphne.

At the end of half an hour or so, when he had completed the first dialogue—which, after all, is just to fill in more or less brilliantly while the late comers are rustling to their seats, and has not much "meat" in it—he found himself at the point where either "flesh, fowl, or good red herring" simply *had* to be introduced. And he decided to consult the literary slaughterhouse of Miss Dalroy's novel.

He opened it at a certain page and presented it to his companion.

"Will you please read on from here?" he asked.

Clearly glad of the change, Julie took the book and did as she was requested. She read in the way that she talked, distinctly and without pretense. Listening, Vaughn thought that Vicky had done well in this book. He admired its satire and enjoyed its jabs of wit. The writer made clever attacks, but was still cleverer at self-defense, for every time that she found herself at a height where the air was too rare for her, she and the scene took a drop on a paracutic apothegm that made a reader idly smile and forgive the fraud. But Julie never smiled. She stolidly read on. There came a place that promised a psychological climax; but Vicky skied rapidly past with the question: "While there's life there's hope—but what's the use?"

From its topographical position, it tinkled rather funnily on Vaughn's ears, causing him to emit a chuckle. Julie took this to be a snort, and approved.

"It is cheap and poor—all of it," she said agreeingly. No longer timid or self-conscious, her big eyes sought his squarely. Just so would one good man look at another.

"It grows better farther on," said Vaughn, procrastinating the issue. Also, he was constitutionally unresponsive to all positivism out of the mouths of babes.

Julie filled her lungs full of fresh air, then dove back into the miry sea, hoping for pearls. She read steadily on to the place where, for one of them at least, the story grew "better." In the stirring middle of things, Julie closed the book, laid it softly upon the table, then arose with a rush.

"If that has any meaning at all, it has a bad meaning," she said, trembling, "and I am soiling my time; if no mean-

ing, then I am wasting my time. In either case, I am done."

Recovering from the onslaught and the accusation, he stared up at her, half repelled, half fascinated, by her crudity.

"Miss Beaulieu, by the time you have gone a little farther in your course of literature, don't you think you will be better qualified to censor?" he asked, smiling indefatigably to take the worst curse off the words.

"Yes," she answered promptly. "And by the time you have gone back to the same place, you will be better qualified, too."

"My child," he said, belittling her gently, though with anything but gentleness of spirit, "I must forgive you the insult, for I led you on."

"I do not need you to forgive me," she answered proudly. "And, if you will let me, I think I can prove to you that I was not rude."

"I am sure it will delight me to receive that proof," he answered, as gravely as to a recalcitrant nine-year-old.

Leaving him, she skimmed up the open stairway to her own room, reappearing almost immediately with a soberly bound, fat volume.

"So poor Vicky is to be weighed up against the Bible and, by the logis of illogic contrast, found wanting!" he decided to himself.

But Julie was playing fair. She was weighing a novel against a novel. She had Thackeray's "Newcomes."

"I am going to read you the chapter where Colonel Newcome answers '*Adsum!*' when his name is called," she announced, settling herself for the test.

As she read, the walls of the log hut receded till the space within was wide enough to hold the kindness and sweetness of the whole world. And the quiet undersong of the everlasting forest rose like a gentle hymn, filling the heart

with the peace of future promise, even while wringing it to tears. For Julie cried as she read; and, listening again to the simple telling of the death of him who is perhaps the most beautiful man character in all fiction—the dear old colonel who, robbed of everything in life but dignity, answered to the Master's roll call with the schoolboy's word, "Present!"—Aubrey Vaughn's eyes filled with tears of which he could not, in honor, be ashamed.

A second time Julie closed a book, but this book she held pressed treasuringly to her breast.

"Fifty years from now, will any one be reading *that*?" she asked sobbingly, pointing down at the story that was "cheap." "And what is there about *this* that fastens itself around the heart of you who are a 'man of the world,' as they say, and of me whom you have just called a 'child?' It is the goodness of it, the enduring goodness, bringing us to the knowledge that there are just such scenes of sorrow going on in the world right now, and that it is our duty to cause as little of it as we can. And if you want me to continue in my 'course of literature' till I am no longer hurt by what is vile, why, I'm not going to do it! I'm not going to do it!"

She laid Thackeray extinguishingly on top of Miss Dalroy, walked staidly to the door, then darted out into the freedom of the forest coverts, like a frightened, but glad bird that has freed itself from a snare.

He was on fire to follow her, mad with a natural desire to have subtle battle with so pretty a girl in such a promisingly unscrewed mood. Yet he could do nothing but glower like a penned-up bull at the branching wild-wood that was out of reach.

Then he pawed "The Newcomes" nearer, and sullenly began to read for himself, gradually succumbing to content and good temper under the spell



of his boyish days, when the story had gripped him tremendously.

It was with reluctance that he finally shoved the book away again and renewed work on his play.

"You're a great old chap, William Makepeace, but you won't earn me an income," he murmured, shaking a small dose of drug into his palm and administering it to himself. "Lord, how that beautiful, red-headed young woodpecker upsets me! When I get two feet, she'd better look out!"

The next forenoon, when she meekly reapplied for the post of secretary, she donated him several propitiatory looks that were not unmingled with apprehension, much as a venturesome baby would eye a nice big house dog that it has yesterday pulled at till it snapped.

"To-day we won't do anything but *write*," he said, both as promise and warning.

"Yes, Mr. Vaughn," she answered, annoyingly tame.

That day there was no fine fight, or the next, or the next. The play grew very slowly; its sap rose just so high and then refused to go higher. Some irritatingly unseasonable chill had set in.

Never a believer in telling everything he knew, Vaughn kept silent about the fact that he now could use his own hand, and continued to employ Julie's, liking to see it travel meekly over the paper in obedience to his masculine dictation. He enjoyed the sensation of being the one who wound her up and made her go.

Then came a day when he angrily found out that she was unwinding him and bringing him to a stop. Her prim Puritanism was the chill that was retarding the struggling sap. Theoretically beautiful as were her standards, they were devilishly clogging to the feet of modern genius. He was at a crucial scene, where any words less poisonous than an asp would be mere

suicidal slobber. Those choice words were all merrily ripe on his tongue, but he found himself puerilely hesitating about spilling them over his "woodpecker's" head.

Her aggravating narrowness was dwarfing the growth of American drama. Something drastic had to be done.

"I can get along better without you," he said without warning; and he took the manuscript from her.

"I think it more than likely, Mr. Vaughn," she answered, rising with unflattering alacrity.

"You evidently have been very bored," he said.

"Not all the time," she said nervously.

"No? Then when?"

She silently handed him the pencil, most polite about tendering it handle end first.

"Or when have you not been bored?" he substituted, quite snatching the implement. "I wish you'd speak!"

"Give me a few more years in which to qualify as a censor," she replied, retreating unhurriedly from the room.

"Slippery young she-fox!" he murmured in a fierce aside, then hurled himself upon his work; getting somewhere, too, which compensated him for being deserted.

But he missed the girl keenly. He had grown so used to watching the lights in her glorious hair and studying the lovely shadows of her down-drooped, fair face that her empty place at the table was now as blank as a wall from which a dearly loved picture has been taken. And he missed the actual fragrance of her presence, of her sweet, sunned hair and lake-laved flesh, as the shelved vase must miss the scent of the vanished rose.

But his play warmed up. And the weather warmed up, too, till at last the month was June. By using his primitive crutches, he had hobbled much





"Don't let me disturb you," he suggested, sitting down on a boulder conveniently near.

around the house, with no other result than that of chasing Julie more and more often into the open. There she felt quite safe, even when at no great distance from the cabin.

But one morning he discovered that he could walk without his crutches, and he immediately scouted for her, taking the lake path on Shon's recommendation.

He discovered her before she did him, and he was therefore enabled to creep trappingly near. What with the astonishing mass of hair that covered them, no wonder that her ears were dull. She had come up from her mermaid plunge and had dressed, but her wonderful mane was still damp and she had it hanging loose to dry, while

she stretched out on a rock to read, her head propped up on one young elbow.

Red was a wicked name to apply to such hair. Gold—brass—copper—any one of these was nearer the truth. It made a burnished, rippling, glittering mantle that clothed her from scalp to heel—literally.

Aubrey Vaughn furnished his own cue music by humming the very appropriate stanza from the "Lorelei," and instigated a quite pretty exhibition by so doing, causing the girl to start up with anguished modesty and try to shove her tresses into some sort of retirement behind her back. But her slight body was insufficient ambush for such wealth, and it leaked out all around her like the aura of an eclipsed sun.

"Don't let me disturb you," he suggested, sitting down on a boulder conveniently near.

For himself, he was strangely at peace. The picture was back in place against his life's wall, and the vase knew again the perfume of the rose.

"You do not disturb me," she answered.

And he was vexed to feel that this was strictly true. Any male appearance would have precipitated that virginal scramble for neatness.

She resumed her comfortable attitude upon her shelving rock, and kept from reading only by exercising the sternest politeness. Her white hand was flattened against the open book, that the precious place might not be lost. That book contained the pious meditations of Marcus Aurelius.

"Ought to be a good dryer, even for hair," he said, touching off the fuse on purpose. "It's as dry reading as anything I know."

She parted her lips to reply, then demurely shut them again, guessing at his device.

"You haven't yet told Richard that you are glad he is himself again," he hinted, with a pensively explaining glance at his ankle.

"I wish Richard took a few common humanities for granted," she observed stiffly.

"He does. It's the uncommon ones he's reaching for."

His reply seemed to absolve her from the irking necessity for politeness, and she furtively began to read.

After enduring the silence for a little while, he broke it to ask very earnestly:

"When you reach a ripe-enough age, are you going to be a nun?"

"No, Mr. Vaughn."

"Not yet decided upon your career?"

"Yes, Mr. Vaughn."

"Ah? I wish you'd tell me about it."

"I'm going to be an actress."

Coming from any other impulsive red-headed girl, this would not have been taken seriously by him, but would have been credited to youth's illusory early ambitions. Is not every boy at five years of age going to be a soldier, and at six a car conductor or something else equally high up?

But coming from Julie Beaulieu, it meant something alarmingly earnest.

"You! With your published predilections for children, trees, and the *real*!" he exclaimed, brutally ironic.

"Art is real," she said. Her long eyelashes fluttered, but she did not trouble herself to look at him.

"It is. And life is earnest—in copy books!"

"And outside of copy books?"

"Art is a noisy sham."

"And life?"

"A practical joke—awfully funny to look at."

"Now ask me."

"Julie, my prize pupil, what is art?"

"A sham representation of ideals so beautiful that we might miss them without art's guidance."

"And life, my poor scholar?"

"A practical joke that, bravely borne, will bring to us all the happiness that we ourselves have spread. I intend to be an actress."

"And how will you square with your aggravatingly lively conscience for leaving your father?"

"By comparing his then estate with the way he feels now," she answered, going off into one of her helpless fits of tinkling laughter.

"You're too young for me to argue with!" he said, getting up angrily.

Furious for no clear reason, but furious, he hobbled back to the house and rounded a corner to confront Shon Blue busy scaling a catch of "suckers."

"Ha! My Aubree! Return' wit' a flea in your ear. Yes? No?" he chuckled.

"Jean Beaulieu, if you have any

parental authority whatever, which I begin to doubt, use it to keep your daughter off the stage!"

"*Y'est ici une grande 'tira-lira,'*" commented Shon. "But for w'at? My poor Julie haf to hearn her living in t'is way or t'at. Yes? No? And for me, I truly t'ink t'e stage mus' haf a greater vary t'an to teach a school. Aha?"

"A much greater 'vary!' I should say so! Shon, you've lived in the backwoods till you have forgotten about the pitfalls of the stage!"

"Ah, bah! It is not t'e pitfalls t'at mus' be worry about, but t'e girl! And I know my Julie. Did I not know her mot'er? And knowing t'at blessed one"—here Shon dropped fish and knife and made the sign of the cross—"did I not know my Julie even before she might be born?"

"You and your Julie are both children together," settled Vaughn morosely.

"Not but w'at I would feel more satisfy if she were Cat'olique," admitted Shon, again crossing himself. "T'e Cat'olique religion is a very safe rope to a heifer's leg," he went on, with mystery and reverence. "But Julie, she select' to be Presbyter' like her mot'er. However, one t'ing is certain—a beauty like Julie is for some man, soon or late."

"And you are going to turn her loose to be married by the first man who infatuates her?"

"It is Julie w'o will do t'e marry," stated Shon, with the glimmer of a grin. "And I t'ink she will do t'e 'fatuate, too. She haf t'e hair of success."

"Air or hair?" asked Vaughn, never able to feel quite sure of Shon's aspirations.

"Hair," said Shon, breathing it out like a steam-engine exhaust. "Do t'e hartist desire to paint a perfect Magdalen? Hair like Julie'. To paint a

saint to draw men to t'e sky? Hair like Julie'. A murderess? Same hair. A martyr? T'e same. We haf a proverb, my dear Aubree, t'at happiness—w'ich is call' *'le grand peut-être'*—t'e great perhaps—is found in t'e nes' of a magpie, and so——"

"Why there?" interrupted Vaughn.

"Because t'at nes', it is build almos' out of reach," elucidated Shon. "And, my dear Aubree, Julie's hair, it is t'e badge of t'e great perhaps. Maybe she will lif on a hill; maybe she will lif in a vale; but she will lif to make a *plon-plon* of band musique, whet'er up hor down. And w'at will be t'e experience of a Presbyter' wit' a head of hair like Julie, t'e good God alone knows."

"This is not the first time I've seen Providence used as a prop for a lazy man's back," flayed Vaughn.

"Nor t'e firs' time t'at I haf seen a young man get his philant'ropy and a pretty girl ver' much mix' up," returned Shon, running his hands cleansingly through his shaggy hair.

Leaving him unceremoniously, Vaughn went back to Julie, driven there by forces that had leaped to life within him at Shon's statement that the girl's beauty was for some man, soon or late. He knew now why he had been so furious when she had told him that she was going on the stage. Before that admission, he had been unconsciously comfortable in a belief that she would indefinitely remain at home, for him to look at whenever he chose to make the trip. Now, unless he hurried, he would be bound to lose her. So he hurried.

She was just where he had left her, stretched in the sun on a rock, reading pious meditations, drying her hair, and shrining high resolve to be an actress.

He pulled the book from her slim white hands and slapped it forever shut. Fleetingly he took notice of the near dazzle of the lake behind him and the far dazzle of the sky above

him. Spiritually, he did not know whether he was going to drown himself or learn to fly; he knew only that he had to speak.

"Julie, I love you," he said, the words knotting in his constricted throat and coming out roughly.

She was too angry to indulge in her trick of easy blushing. The face she raised to him was of marble coldness and whiteness.

"You will explain to me, if you please, the necessity for insulting me twice with the same pleasantry," she commanded. She was as bewildered as she was indignant.

"It isn't an insult, Julie, or a pleasantry," he defended. Her icy placidity made it impossible for him to take her in his arms. And words are very poor things to woo with. They are valuable only when used as incidental music to dramatic action. "And it wasn't that first time, either. Oh, I don't expect you to believe me, but it's so. I think I loved you even before I saw you—loved you from the sound of your voice. There was a note in it that I've been waiting to hear all my life. Julie, if I keep on stammering words for three years, I can't say any more than I have said! I really love you, Julie. Won't you even *try* to love me?"

"Oh, dear! Oh, dear! Isn't this terrible?" she ejaculated, intimately addressing Fate or her guardian angel or some other invisible guide who had floundered. She was now so red and embarrassed that frightened tears stood in her eyes. "Mr. Vaughn, I'm so sorry that you thought you had to say what everybody else says."

"Everybody else, Julie?"

"Yes; all the little boys and the big boys. But I never thought that a really nice gentlemanly man like you would be so teasing and—so uncomfortable!"

The tears had swelled to big drops and one had rolled to her cheek. The sight of them filled him less with com-

passion than with a dull sense of defeat and general inutilty. They were the tears of a startled child, not those of a woman. She was miles from comprehending a man's feelings.

"Oh, don't cry, Julie," he said, half irritably. There was an awful vacancy at his heart. A whole chunk of something had dropped right out of him. There was not much to be done in the way of passionate argument with a girl so cold that she found love "teasing and uncomfortable." "I can't take back my words, but you—you can forget them."

"Yes, I will, I will!" she cried, as eagerly as if promising him a favor. "And you will forget them, too, won't you? Please! For I like you so much."

"Oh, you like me, do you?" Though anything but amused, he laughed.

"Yes. I would like you *very* much, if you would only let me," she announced, quite timidly.

"If I would 'let' you?" he echoed, trying to take her. "Why, what have I been asking?"

She successfully side-stepped.

"Oh, I don't mean anything horrible, like that," she gasped. Then she hesitatingly explained herself. "I want to like you as I like—well, all *big* things—that have power—like the sea and—"

"Don't trouble yourself," he said brusquely. "In fact, I'd rather you entirely left off liking me. I might have some chance then. No, Julie. I want just one thing from you, and you won't give it."

"I can't give it, Mr. Vaughn, for I haven't got it."

"Well, that's the end, then."

Fretted and disconcerted—hurt, too, like one who has had a gate shut in his face—he went back to the cabin.

"Shon, I leave for the city to-morrow," he announced.

"And wit'out having catch a fish!" murmured Shon.

## CHAPTER V.

On the morrow, it was indeed June everywhere except in the disappointed heart. Driving from the cabin back to Sarnoc depot, and watching the woods from which he had been debarred, Vaughn took gloomy satisfaction in noting that everything but himself showed a big improvement over May.

The country trip, which he had planned to be an open-air vacation, had in reality been a thing more "cribbed and confined" even than his city life. Barring the advantages of quiet days and nights of good sleep, he had derived nothing from it but disappointment.

And the cause of that disappointment had cared so little for him that she had not even remained at home to bid him good-by, but had slipped off on one of her morning rambles.

The hand of June had wrought a change even in the railroad service, and several tourist coaches superseded the yellow caboose. Liberated clerks and schoolma'ams had been let loose on the land, to shoot the songbirds and pull up the wild flowers by the roots.

As soon as a Pullman was added, Vaughn took to it, trying to feel that every flying minute of travel was putting sorrow back into the realm of uneasy dreams and bringing the solid satisfactions of life nearer and nearer. His journey took the whole of the day and the whole of the night, not landing him in "civilization" till the following morning.

Then, after making a scrupulously correct toilet quite up to New York's most exacting standards for a clubman, and after being landed on the platform of the Grand Central Station, he found himself sniffing the metropolitan air with a bit of real rapture. No two ways about it, the dear old city has a thousand and one sweet ways of welcome for its returning child.

Taller than most of his fellow travelers by a head, Vaughn hurried through the throng of them in order to be one of the first to gain the street and an unlimited choice of taxis. With a mad sort of gathering excitement and joy, he took his old place in the clang and clatter and bustle and rush and deafening noise. He thrilled to feel that he was as good-looking a man as any and a better-looking man than most, and that the smartly clad women around him were worth the glances they had planned to get.

He decided to put the near past away from him like an old garment and to open wide his arms to the complaisant new. Old garments would look as unforgivable as leprosy in that fashion-plate crowd.

Then he heard a stammering, sweet voice behind him.

"Please, Mr. Vaughn—if you wouldn't walk so fast——"

Not in the entire world were there two such voices.

"Julie!" he cried, wheeling round upon her. "Why—— How—— You don't mean to say that——"

Even he himself did not know how to put it. For as yet he did not fully know *what* she had done. He only knew that she was standing there in her rough skirt and workboy's blouse and country shoes, with a little plaid coat hung over her arm and a close, queer hat upon her wonderful hair; that her face was frightened, but more vividly lovely than ever; that she was being jostled by other people's suit cases and menaced by trucks of baggage; that she literally did not know which way to turn or what to do next; and that she had called to him in all of a child's desperation.

"Where is your father, Julie?" he asked, searching hopefully over her head.

"Just where we left him, Mr. Vaughn."





He heard a stammering, sweet voice behind him. "Please, Mr. Vaughn—if you wouldn't walk so fast——"

"But who is 'we,' Julie? Remember I know nothing."

"By 'we,' I mean you and I, of course. I took the same train that you did, though another car."

"With your father's permission?"

"I don't know yet whether it is with his permission or without," she replied gravely. "I left an explaining letter for him."

"And do you mind 'explaining' to me also, Julie?" he asked, growing quite flabby with apprehension as he guessed nearer and nearer to the truth.

"It is very simple. It is this: In order to obtain a theatrical position, I

had to reach New York. So I came. That is all. True, I did not know what the next step should be, but one never does until after the first is taken. The only way to start is to start. Is not that true?"

"Frightfully so," he agreed. "Frightfully."

"That is what made me leave so suddenly. I walked through the woods to the railroad and reached the coaches from their farther side, getting on without anybody seeing me. I wished to shirk the duty of a public explanation. But I see that if you shirk a duty at one end of a journey, it travels with you

and meets you when you land—where it becomes *particularly* public."

She looked at the moving throng with considerable distaste. The continued pallor of her face, where the lively blood generally loved to come and go, gave him reason to ask hurriedly:

"Have you had breakfast? Have you had anything to eat since you left?"

"No, and now you remind me, I am very hungry."

Glad of something to do that was definite without being final, he piloted her to the station café, where he took a table and ordered a meal.

"Now go on with your story, Julie," he urged.

"It has not happened yet," she answered, half smiling. "This is as far as I've got."

"Whom do you know in New York?"

"Only you."

"Then I shall send you back to your father," he mused aloud.

Immediately he became aware that his words had changed the runaway child into an excusably affronted adult.

"And by what authority do you 'send' me anywhere, Mr. Vaughn?" she demanded, with a quiet coldness that quite maddened him under the circumstances.

Only twenty-four hours ago she had learned from him that he loved her; then she had refused him; then she had practically run off with him; now she was asking him by what authority he was expressing himself in regard to her affairs, and asking him with a dignity that silenced him!

"I hoped you would help me," she said presently, swallowing her hauteur with a sigh. "Won't you *please*, Mr. Vaughn?"

"Suppose you tell me of your intentions, Julie," he suggested, dying to laugh at the leap-year sound of his words, but not daring. "First, where were you thinking of staying?"

"I thought—maybe—with you," she faltered, showing signs of worry at

being obliged to promulgate that decision instead of him. "For a few days. I thought, perhaps, if you told them that my father was your friend——"

He had a piece of buttered toast mid-way to his mouth, but he had no biting ability left, only strength enough to restore the morsel to his plate. Then he leaned across the table, asking in meek desperation:

"Julie, who's 'them'?"

"Why, your father and mother," she gave out, very much more surprised at him than he at her. "Or your aunt—or sister. Your family—those in your home."

"Home!" he echoed, with derisive sadness. "You mean one of those old-fashioned sweet houses with flowers in the front yard and kittens, or maybe a cow, in the back yard. You've come to the wrong city. In New York there is no space for home. I'm speaking only the truth. You will see for yourself. I live at my club, Julie. My friends live at theirs. My mother is in Italy. Dad—well, all I can be sure of in regard to dad is that he is *not* where mother is. None of us have met for years. We write at Christmas. Such families as I know live in flats, and they are rubbed quite raw from too close contact with one another. Julie, you resent the paternal tone from me, but I have to tell you that you've made a big mistake."

"Oh, no," she said quickly. "No, I haven't. And I would not have troubled your mother for more than a day or so, till I could find a place. Everything is all right. And I don't mind a paternal tone at all, Mr. Vaughn, for father permits me to do exactly as I judge best. I need some one to help me select a lodging, then to introduce me to some manager of a theater. Will you do these two favors for me?"

"For your sake, I can't say 'with pleasure;' but I will do it," he promised.

When breakfast was over, she ten-

dered him her purse. He took it merely to conserve its contents, and pocketed it. It was thin.

"How much money have you?" he asked bluntly.

"Not much. Only nineteen dollars. I must begin at once to earn."

And this was June, with every theater closing!

Out in the street, Julie directed an awed gaze at the immensity of the city and at the hostile solidity of its high stone walls. But she refused to express herself. When she finally glanced down from the battlements in high air to the pedestrians skirmishing past, she was more communicative.

"I do not look right," she announced, though without especial concern. "I'm glad I have a better dress in a bag."

It seemed monstrous to him that, among all his friends, he knew not one motherly woman to whom he could take the girl, tell the circumstances, and expect to be respectfully believed. But it was so. He wondered if he was going to have the same sort of difficulty with landladies. And he was.

"To some street where there are decent lodging houses," was the sotto-voice instruction he gave to his cabman.

Accepting that gentleman's proficient word for it, he and Julie got out a little later and patrolled a street of three-story houses whose every parlor window yelped—by card—the pathetic word: "Rooms!"

"Don't come up till you have to," Vaughn told Julie emphatically, as he prepared to mount the first steps. "I'll do the scouting."

He feared exactly what he got. The landlady, at first all smiles at his wealthy appearance, froze immediately at sight of the poorly clad beauty for whom the room was required, and stated curtly that she had no vacancies at present. The thing kept up. The more pleasant looking the landlady, the

more prompt she was to avow her filled condition.

"Then they ought to take in their signs," said Julie hotly, after Vaughn had explained the apparent difficulty to her. "I'd tell them so if I were you."

Exhausting one side of the street, they tried the opposite side. One house looked so neat that Vaughn prayed for luck. But he fared as before.

"No," said the cleanly, quiet woman who opened the door and listened to him, casting a half-veiled glance at the placid young Venus on the sidewalk. "No, sir. My rooms are all rented."

Gathering this from the general expression on both faces—an expression with which she was by now discouragingly familiar—Julie suddenly ran up the short stone flight and delivered herself of an opinion.

"If you haven't any rooms to rent, you should take in your sign," she said positively. "This prevailing practice of letting them remain in the window is not honest."

"I do not need the like of you, young woman, to tell me what is honest," said the housekeeper, bristling indignantly.

"Come, Miss Beaulieu," said Vaughn, quickly leading his astonished charge down to the sidewalk again.

There Julie balked, refusing to go farther till something was settled.

"The 'like' of me?" she repeated, puzzled. "What did she mean by that? I must ask her."

On the word, Julie ran up the steps again and got to the door just before it could be slammed.

"Explain yourself," she said authoritatively to the woman, who was now perplexed and wavering, Julie and honesty being so evidently one. "I do not like your words to me. They sounded rude. If they were meant to be so, you must apologize. I am Julie Beaulieu of Sarnoc. Who are you?"

"I am Mrs. Curtis. I rent rooms, miss, and I have to be careful."

"But you weren't. You were not at all careful in speaking so to me. What did you mean by it?"

By now Vaughn had regained her side, and he braced himself for the brutal explicit. But it did not come.

"I think I spoke too quickly," said the harassed Mrs. Curtis, looking perplexedly from girl to man and back to girl again. "I remember now, miss, I have a room that might suit you. If you would care to look at it——"

"Thank you. She would," settled Vaughn quickly, rightly fearing that Julie, if left to herself, wouldn't.

Thus, ultimately, was the lodging question satisfactorily settled. Would that theatrical managers might prove no more obdurate!

Temporarily washing his hands of the whole queer thing for a blissful day or two, Vaughn left Julie with the vanquished Curtis and sought his own haunts. He was as nervously tired as if he had done a whole day's work with the ax and had cut down only one tree out of an entire forest. Facing him was the hour when he would have to explain Julie to Carmen and Vicky and Gene. Just now he couldn't explain Julie even to himself.

By the way, among Vaughn's mail there was a telegram from Shon—the fattest message that was ever condensed into ten words and spelled correctly by an obliging operator. It said:

I trust you to guide honorably an unworldly Presbyterian fool.

JEAN BEAULIEU.

## CHAPTER VI.

Relying hopefully upon the "betterness" of Julie's "dress in a bag," Vaughn called up Nate Levison, the mighty hander out of theatrical jobs, and after being "helloed" through several outer offices to the inner sanctum,

got him on the other end of the wire—something almost as hard to accomplish as meeting him face to face.

"Hullo, Nate."

"Who is it?"

Vaughn heard the aristocrat's shoe leather creak irritably. Nate's crossed feet were always on top of his desk, and therefore on the same plane with the telephone. Vicky Dalroy said that Nate Levison kept his foot up so as to be able to put it down.

"It's Vaughn—Aubrey Vaughn."

"Oh, hullo, Vaughn! What's the word?"

"If you're there this afternoon, I'd like to bring a friend of mine to see you."

"What's his graft?"

"It is a young lady who wants to go on the stage."

"Have a heart! Ring off."

"Hold on, Nate. She's rather promising."

"Young?"

"Seventeen."

"Got looks?"

"Got beauty."

"Got a figure?"

"What does 'beauty' mean? Don't be thick, Nate!"

"Had any experience?"

"Well, no, Nate."

"Shove in the sob stop. So much the better. The less experience they've had, the easier they are to teach. Trot her around." Click!

All of which explains why Julie and Vaughn walked up Broadway in the afternoon, and why he took sideways architectural looks at the elevations and projections of her costume. On the whole, it was a big improvement over the former one, but still registered only about eighty per cent of that mystic hundred mark known as "the thing." Yet she had effected several clever changes in herself that showed her to possess adaptability as well as observation. For instance, she had arranged

her hair in exact accordance with the popular mode, with the result that her odd little hat now appeared to be rather an eccentricity of good taste than a consummation of bad. And she had wisely spent some of her few, few dollars in the purchase of proper footwear. It is quite true that a penny saved is a penny earned; but it is equally true that five dollars spent is often a fortune earned. And, going back to boots, a theatrical manager is the one wild beast that can't be successfully hunted by the wearer of Canadian shoe packs.

Summing her up, Julie looked exactly what she was—a beautiful bit of unsophistication thoroughly enjoying a thrilling moment. Whenever she showed him this phase of herself, Vaughn's undertug of yearning sentiment slackened up a bit, and he admired her naïveté and loveliness without an ache at his heart. What she thus gave of herself, he did not particularly want. It belonged to the whole world. But within her, locked in the strong box of her perverse woman heart, he still felt that she was secreting a value that belonged in part to him, willed to him by the great Father God of them both; a value that she would never give up without battle. And he wanted it; he wanted it as he had never yet wanted anything in all his eager life. But she had denied it to him; she had kept his own from him, treating him like a pretender, thus intimating that she was guarding it, hoarding it for some other. *His* heritage! And so, as often as she made one of her swift changes from child to woman, so often did the pain of his disinheritance come back to him, causing him to take but dull discontent in the worldly possessions that he had won by himself, for himself.

The present moment happening to be her important one, not his, he naturally effaced himself from it as much

as possible, and existed chiefly to prepare her for the ordeal to come.

"And though Nate Levison is a good-enough chap, Julie, he can't be measured by ordinary conventional standards," he concluded, his hand on the sanctum door.

By the unmeasurable quantity, he most meant Nate's feet on the desk.

"What genius can?" asked Julie softly.

"Pity he didn't hear that!" groaned Vaughn, opening the door. "It might have helped."

Not aware that, in being admitted to The Presence, she was enjoying a privilege that should have blinded her to all lesser things, Julie widened her eyes in consternation at perceiving herself in the relaxed company of a man in his shirt sleeves, with his feet on the desk, his hat on his head, and the pulpy butt of a cigar fuming from the least busy corner of his mouth. The fact that he possessed a kind heart was partly obscured by the blue suspender that ran over it.

"You're good to give us your time, Nate," observed Vaughn, ingratiatingly stating a truth.

"You just bet I am!" replied Nate Levison, puffing affably. "So you pay back by hurrying."

"This is the young lady I spoke about," obeyed Vaughn, more ingratiatingly. "This is Miss Julie Beaulieu."

"So this is Julie Beaulieu, heh?" inquired Levison, squinting appraisingly at her through his smoke.

"Yes, Mr. Levison," she answered for herself. "And if you will acquaint me with your reasons for treating me with disrespect, I am confident of being able to refute them."

Mentally, Vaughn made every preparation for opening the door and retiring her. To pour *sauce piquante* over Nate Levison was the last way in the world to render him digestible. But the mystery of Julie's gentle voice held



good, causing Levison rather to heed the note of sincerity in it than to take exception to the words, and inclining him to scrutinize her with greater intimacy. She had not spoken impertinently, but with grave wonder. But if she had not been extraordinarily lovely, possessing that indefinable charm of body that causes tickets to be sold, warming a box office, she would have been done for even now, dignity or no dignity.

Nate Levison well knew that if he did not engage her, some other manager would; so he parleyed.

"My feet are on my desk chiefly to protect them from being stepped on by applicants," he said smoothly. "Sometimes a high stepper comes along, though, and she gets 'em, even where they are. And my coat is off so that nobody shall make me too hot. I smoke because it's an easier death than being strangled by the perfumes the women drench themselves with. And I keep my hat on my head so as to teach it its place. Now that we have satisfactorily disposed of all business, suppose we proceed to pleasantries. So you want to go on the stage, heh?"

While this was being hollowly megaphoned off to her, Julie backed inch by inch nearer to Vaughn till she almost touched him. Her unconscious mind selected him as the least offensive of the man pair. This instinctive seeking of him thrilled him oddly.

She, in turn, was as impressed by the stand taken by Levison as he had been by hers. One personage had met another; that was all.

"Yes, I not only want to go on the stage, but I am going," she answered timidly. "Can you put me there? If you can't, I won't take up any more of your time."

Dispatch of this sort was wine to bored Nate Levison.

"Oh, yes, I can put you there," he

said. "But can you stay there? That's the point."

"I can always stay where I'm put, Mr. Levison; at least till I myself am ready to move."

"In what direction do you generally move?" he asked, sardonically enjoying things. "Up or down?"

"Forward on the level," she answered, her fascinating dimple suddenly coming into action.

"Got anything for her in your new play?" asked Levison, staring thoughtfully at Vaughn.

"Nothing but the thinnest sort of a bit," he answered.

"Too clever to take a small part?" grunted Nate to the aspirant.

"Oh, no!" she eagerly replied. "Did not Epaminondas accept the position of street cleaner in Thebes, to prove that he knew how to lead?"

"Dunno. No leading man on my lists with such a mutt name as 'Paminondas,'" replied Nate decisively. "And that reminds me—your name won't do."

"Won't do?" asked Julie proudly. "Beaulieu? It did well in the days of the Holy Crusade!"

"Um. But to-day Holy Crusade is taking a rest. Here! Write your name on this piece of paper and I'll show you."

Julie did as she was told, then stood regarding the result.

"Fancy that on a program!" said Levison, dismally tapping the surname with the pencil. "Beaulieu. Half the audience would call you 'Bo Liar' and the other half 'Bully You.' Won't do. Have to have more unanimity than that. Won't do."

"At Sarnoc they call me 'Shulie Blue,'" admitted the girl, smiling.

"Julie Blue! That goes!"

Here Levison's telephone began to blow off tinkling bubbles. As he throatily grabbed it, he said:

"Have her present at the reading of





the point I wish to raise is this: Doesn't the undue strength of a small part, a *very* values of the whole?"

the play, Vaughn." And the interview was over.

Upon reaching the street, Vaughn said rallyingly:

"Permit me to offer you hearty congratulations, Miss Blue!"

"But we were no sooner in than out," she said, bewildered. "Is anything settled?"

"Everything!"

"Then I must go write it all to father," she exclaimed, "and let him thank you, who can do it better than I can."

"Oh, I don't want any thanks, Julie!" he cried irritably.

He was growing easy to irritate these days, for some reason or other. His overworked mind and underrested body seemed of late to harbor a small demon who either pricked him to quick gusts of ill temper or jaded him to fits of depression. Often he would grow stupidly sleepy when in good company, yet when he sought his bed, would grow staringly wide awake. The demon's greatest delight was to fill him full of morbid doubts concerning his ability to write. Nothing but a dose of the drug restored him to normal. He considered that drug a real boon to humanity—used temperately as he was using it.

"No thanks except to see you succeed, Julie," he finished, steadying himself. "I am going to rewrite your part and strengthen it all I can. I'm being kept very hard at work, Julie. I hope you don't think I'm neglecting you."

"Do you imagine that I came to New York to be a pensioner upon your leisure time, Mr. Vaughn?" she asked, a trifle amused at the odd idea.

"I meant nothing of the sort! I meant that it is I who would like to be a pensioner on yours."

"But I have no leisure. Like you, I am hard at work, too."

"Still, you must be lonely now and then. I have some women friends,

Julie, that I will ask to come around and see you."

"Thank you. When I am ready to receive callers, I will let you know," she answered evenly.

"I accept my dismissal," he said, lifting his hat. Then he left her.

He did not see her again for many days; not till she, with others of the company and a few critico-literary outsiders, met to hear the formal reading of the new play. In some of his demon-ridden moments he had half hoped she would pay for her refusal of himself and his friends by making acquaintance with loneliness. But she had evidently not done so. The proof was in her eager, wide-awake face. That face of hers was living testimony to the fact that those who live with high resolves are never alone.

When free of his demon, Vaughn had feared that she might present, and feel, a trace of "dowdiness" when brought into immediate contact with such dashingly dressed young women as Carmen and Vicky. But he need not have worried. True, her dress was still twenty per cent below par, but she wore it so unconsciously, and took her place in that parlor of fashionables with such calm poise, that others in time were bound to forget it, too.

And Levison helped.

"Why, here's 'Holy Crusade,'" he said, going up to her with evident entertainment and causing a tide of interest to turn in her direction. "How are you? I haven't had my toes trodden on since you left. Come over here, Savvy, and meet Miss Blue. Bet you a fiver she hacks a bit of hide off you in less than ten minutes."

While Julie was blushing by being shaken by the burly Nate, whom she hardly recognized in his coat and out from under his hat, Gene Savage responded to the invitation by lounging gracefully near. Levison completed introductions, and left them.

Watching from a corner, where he was being held up in conversation by Harvey Kinlock, the lessee of the theater—obliged to listen, not to theatrical notes, but to an account of how Kinlock was bringing himself back to youth over the jolting road of the punch bag—Aubrey Vaughn saw that Julie took immediate fancy to the newcomer, granting him a seat at her side and according him all of her girlish, flattering attention.

He disliked the sight, and not from dog-in-the-manger motives, either. Gene Savage happened to be that worst kind of a rake, a really nice one, one who truly saw no harm in a "good time," and who consequently cherished the sincere belief that he was as generous, noble, and delightful as he outwardly appeared to be. They being neither sheep nor goats, one wonders what is going to be done with the Gene Savages at the Day of Judgment.

"To sum it up, Vaughn, I'm a man who has come back!" claimed Kinlock, folding his thick arms proudly over his fifty-six-year-old chest.

"And who could have been the fool that asked you to?" is what Vaughn wanted to reply. However, he did not, merely mentioning:

"Yes, indeed!"

"The man who grows old has only himself to blame," pursued Kinlock, polishing his eyeglasses before he could look at his watch, and not able to extricate that gold article either till he had flattened his paunch. "Look at me—as young as I was at twenty! Ye gods, do you know what o'clock it is? Hadn't we better begin, my dear chap? For I have to dine on time. That is the secret of youth—the true secret. If I am irregular about my meals, my whole digestion is upset."

And, since the acceptance of plays depends more upon a manager's digestion than is guessed by the general public, Vaughn called the meeting to order.

He took his seat with considerable inward trepidation. His former plays had been received encouragingly, yet merely as forerunners of something that should be really worth while. They had scored pleasingly with the audiences and had cleared expenses—just. He knew that Kinlock was now looking to him to fill the cash box.

So were the others in the room. There was Miss Dalroy. She was depending upon him to increase the sale of her books. Like all other rotting matter, they would turn putrid on a dealer's hands unless kept moving. Vicky was particularly stunning today. She had on bigger earrings than usual. She would have looked as maimed without her ears as without her earrings. While Vaughn read, she smoked cigarettes out of her jeweled case.

And there was Carmen Clare. She was waiting for him to write her into a hit, and could not afford to let him dillydally over it. With her hair and skirt built high and her bodice and shoes cut low, she displayed her florid young charms to the full, and was her own witness to the fact that she was a vivid carnation of a woman who, when the green calyx of her twenties should burst, would flop very untidily into her thirties, and would be scrapheap material at forty.

Then there was stolid "Miss" Ethel Devine, the character woman with two husbands and one grandchild. Miss Devine, like every other sensible young actress with a grandchild, was buying a chicken farm to support her in her old age, and was anxious for a good season so as to keep up the payments on it.

And there was handsome Harry Carroll, who, if given a part with half a chance in it, was bound to make a splash. But good parts for men are scarce these days.

And there was indefatigable, per-



spiring Nate Levison, anxious for all his puppets to "stand up and do him proud."

Lastly, there was beautiful Julie Beaulieu, waiting for him to do something "big," so that she could like him—as she liked the sea.

In regard to Gene Savage, Vaughn knew that it made little difference to him whether the play was a failure or a success; Gene would get a fine write-up out of it, either way.

The amount at stake put him on his mettle, and he read as he had never read before, throwing so much personality and magnetism into his rendering that the big scenes raised breeze enough to blow the thin ones across, too. At the end of the reading, the play was voted a distinct "find." Then came refreshments, and, during the nibbling and the sipping, there followed a discussion of the cast and of the title.

"Why don't you keep the name of the book, Aubrey?" asked the authoress, laying a splendidly beringed hand upon his arm to detain him. He was forging gradually in Julie's direction. "What's the matter with 'Elsa's Honor?'"

"More than we care to mention in mixed company," suavely answered Gene.

"Sounds slushy; looks mushy," stated Nate Levison.

"Why, where did you learn your literary crispness?" asked Gene, conveying admiration. "You, Vicky, had better look to your laurels."

"He didn't have to learn. With him, it's innate," answered Miss Dalroy.

"That's all very well," said Nate, when the laugh had subsided, "but now I'm *magnate*, and I've aske' you all to suggest a new title."

"'The Good in the Worst of Us,'" timidly offered Julie, flushing up to her hair at the sound of her own voice in public, but feeling obliged to be obedient.

"We-e-ll," growled Levison, pondering it.

"'The Bad in the Best of Us,'" substituted Miss Clare, pouring a little cognac in her coffee.

"I call that much better," seconded Vicky Dalroy stoutly. "Don't you, Savvy?"

"It certainly suits the story better," answered Savage. When society forced him to compliance, he generally managed to be double-edged about it.

"What's that *you* said, Miss Devine?" asked Levison, hearing a murmur from that quarter.

"I said, 'Pass me the egg sandwiches,'" acknowledged Miss Devine frankly, helping herself to one. She was making a substantial meal—a meal intended to carry her over to breakfast—and, since her future was to depend upon the popularity of eggs, she was doing all she could to make them social favorites. "And 'The Bad in the Best of Us' suits *me* all right. The two B's make it tumble out of your mouth *easy*."

"Well!" granted Levison briskly. And that was settled.

"Who's going to play *Theodora*?" asked Miss Clare. She was to be *Elsa*.

"Miss Blue, of course," answered Levison. And since *Theodora* was the only clean part in the play, his "of course" was more eloquent than he knew.

"Blue. That is your name?" asked Carmen Clare, leveling a generally dispraising look at Julie.

"A name for the stage, given to me by Mr. Levison," answered Julie. "My rightful one is 'Beaulieu.'"

"You are from Sarnoc, Michigan?" asked Vicky, drawing carefully.

"From Sarnoc, Michigan, Miss Dalroy."

"I *thought* you were from the country," admitted Carmen.

"I am glad it is so evident, Miss Clare."

"Pray enlighten our darkness! Why do you mention that extraction as an advantage?"

"For the reason that, I consider it one, Miss Clare."

"Indeed! Because?"

"Because a country life tends to preserve one's individuality, Miss Clare."

"Even in regard to clothes," granted Carmen, taking in the other's costume.

"Even in regard to clothes, Miss Clare. The best country families do not place much value upon what can be bought across a counter."

"Is it possible? But what *can't* be bought across a counter, these days?"

"Good birth and upright living, Miss Clare."

A discussion of these two points would have retired Miss Clare permanently, so Vicky effected a change of attack by asking with slow sweetness:

"But surely, child, you find it hard to adapt yourself to some of the requirements of city society?"

"Yes, Miss Dalroy. For instance, I find it very hard to be patronized by people who have never experienced the fuller life."

"We are getting precious far away from *Theodora*," threw in Carmen crankily. "And the point I wish to raise is this, Mr. Levison: Doesn't the undue strength of a small part, a *very* minor character, upset the values of the whole?"

"If the audience won't stand for *Theodora*, we'll cut her," promised Nate. "And now the bunch of us'll have to shut up till that thundering old come-back gets through singing," he muttered, seeing Harry Carroll sitting down at the piano, and Kinlock standing up with a piece of music.

Then followed a musical program, at the close of which the company, after being told that rehearsals would begin in September, was tacitly dismissed.

"What do you suppose there is in

that *greeny* to captivate the fancy of a clever man like Orb?" asked Miss Clare, on her way uptown with Miss Dalroy.

"Of Aubrey?" quickly asked the writer. Then, drawlingly, "The 'greeny' may be cleverer than you think, my dear. She knows enough to make herself solid with the dramatic critic, and that's what you didn't."

Harry Carroll and Ethel Devine were also talking Julie over.

"The Clare's goose is cooked," remarked Miss Devine. Even her metaphors ran to poultry.

"To a cinder," agreed Harry.

Levison and Kinlock exchanged views in a taxi.

"—seven, eight, nine, ten," finished Kinlock, referring to his respiration. He was an incalculable nuisance concerning deep breathing. "Say, Nate, I'm betting all my money on the red. Where did you pick her up?"

"On the place where she threw me down," answered Levison, who never could be pumped, even by a deep breather.

Meanwhile, Vaughn, having succeeded in dislodging Gene Savage, was walking Julie slowly toward her boarding house.

"When you helped me write that play, you never thought you'd have a part in it, did you?" he asked her lightly. But he was more eager than he liked to confess. He had been the lion of the afternoon, and he wanted to hear her say so.

"No, Mr. Vaughn, I did not," she answered mournfully. "I did not!"

And this mournfulness proved that only by persistently remembering Epaminondas could she reconcile herself to a street-cleaning fate. Then the chief impression his play had made upon her was that it needed the hose!

He changed the subject rather impatiently.

"Would it not have been wiser of

you, Julie, to have conciliated the two ladies? They're not likely to call upon you now."

"They were never likely to do that," she answered proudly, "for I would not have permitted them."

"I think you have only cut yourself out of some good society," he said shortly.

"Good?" she asked, amazed. "I do not call either of those young women good."

"Do you mind telling me by what standards you are measuring my friends?" he asked hotly.

"By your own, I hope," she replied, giving him a searching look. "Mr. Vaughn, would you like to see *me* sit on the edge of a man's chair and, lighting the cigarette in my mouth from the cigarette in his, say, 'Damn it, Savvy, if you're stingy with matches, you must take the consequences!' This with my arm around his neck!"

Had bluff Naté Levison been the man in this fictitious episode, Vaughn might have laughed at the comic incongruity of it. But Savage—he of the subtle charms and the low-ebb morality! And Julie!

"I would sooner see you dead," he answered slowly. He drew Shon's telegram from his pocket and gave it to her to read. "That gives me the authority—you denied me the other day. I am going to send you back to Sarnoc till rehearsals begin."

"I will do as you say, Mr. Vaughn," she answered, unexpectedly meek. "For I suppose I am the 'Presbyterian fool?'"

"I am an Episcopalian," evaded Vaughn courteously.

## CHAPTER VII.

Only to those who are enjoying a vacation on full pay does the summer go quickly. To all others it swelters interminably along, aggravating their

tempers and vices and running up their bills. With Julie back in Sarnoc, Aubrey Vaughn felt that he had never known in all his life more torrid and eventless months than those that had to pass in order to bring September. The worst thing about a lack of real events is that you have to plunge neck-deep into a lot of make-believe ones in order to satisfy your normal craving for variety. These make-believes naturally consume more energy than the real thing; and if you rely upon a drug for recuperation, you are in a pretty queer shape when work time finally does get around.

However, when September came, and all who were interested in "The Bad in the Best of Us" reported at the big Broadway theater for rehearsal, all of his friends but one told him the customary lovely lie about how well he looked after his "rest." She from whom alone he could expect truth—or silence—was not yet arrived.

"She's here. Got to town last night," vouchsafed Nate, when questioned.

Nate was "hopping around like a chicken with its head cut off"—as Miss Devine put it—for a first rehearsal is a gathering up of loose ends, and a man has to grab lively to let none get away from him.

Of course Miss Dalroy was not there. The book author is always too much of a nuisance to have around, being sensitive in regard to revised situations and apt to be unreasonably touchy when three serious characters are rolled into one low-comedy part. The playwright is there only on sufferance, and if deferred to, had better answer as expected or not at all. The stage manager is the whole thing. This was not Harvey Kinlock. Kinlock was "lessee and manager," a big person who gets on the billboards, gets on the program, gets the most of the receipts, gets in at the back door, gets in at the front, gets

on the stage, gets in the way—and nobody dares say a word. Kinlock had bought a new toupee for his bald spot and was beamingly telling everybody how surf bathing had restored him to his pristine youth.

Nor was Levison stage manager. Levison was business manager—which meant that he bossed everybody but the come-back. He bluffed the come-back. No; the stage manager was Gus Davis, affectionately called "Hot Air," but always behind his back. Gus staged a play as he moved a piano, by the sweat of his brow. He didn't give a rap for precedent; what he most loathed in actors was a rush of brain to the head; all he wanted of them was their obedience. If they were independent once, he fined them; independent twice, he fired them.

Vaughn wondered how Julie would fare with Gus. He was thinking of her all the time, even when apparently chatting with the too-red Carmen and the too-yellow Ethel. Both these women were heavily powdered, heavily scented, and were already wilting disastrously in the stuffy gloom, getting streaky and straight of hair and crushed as to gown, with poor, hot feet that really seemed to boil up and run over their low shoes.

Coming to one of the abrupt cessations of courtesy that were growing upon him, Vaughn broke away from his entertainers and walked to the stage door. Then he saw Julie at a distance and went to meet her. Among the somewhat jaded pedestrians who were worn out with the long heat, she held herself as freshly fair as one of the white wake robins that blossom in the cool greenness of her native woods. For her dress was white and her hat was white and her sunshade was white, setting off the red gold of her hair to perfection. As for her pink-and-white face, that never needed setting off. It was always wonderful and beautiful.

She smiled when she suddenly saw him near.

"Julie!" he cried with a catch in his throat that made the word an appeal. So dull had he been of late that he had wondered if he were over his infatuation. But the dear sight of her brought it all back, and he knew that as long as she should live, he would want her and strive for her. His hand trembled as it touched hers. "Julie!"

"I am glad to see you again, Mr. Vaughn, but sorry that you look so ill," she said, extricating her little hand as soon as she politely could.

Her voice thrilled him in the old way, making his hot blood actually quicken in his veins and filling him with a crazy wish to know how it would feel to have her soft lips touch his. But he was annoyed to have her speak of him as ill.

"Never better in my life," he assured her firmly. "But don't let's talk of me. Let's talk of you, of Shon, of Sarnoc." He had often wanted to write to her, but had too much respected her youthful reserve and pride to do it.

"I have studied a great deal this summer, and sewed a great deal," she said, glancing down at her pretty dress. "Father is happy and well, as always. He sends you a thousand greetings and a standing invitation to the shack."

With her somewhat maddening directness she answered and was done.

"Why didn't you telephone me that you had arrived?"

"Mrs. Curtis has no telephone."

"What? Are you back there?"

"Yes, she is very kind. She seems to like me."

"I'm not surprised at that."

"And she likes you very much."

"I'm surprised at that. She never saw me but the one time."

"It was enough, though. It was enough for me, too. I also liked you at first sight."

The quotation naturally came to him, and he naturally said it:

"Oh, had you liked me less and loved me more,  
Through all those summer days of sun  
and rain,  
I would not now be Sorrow's heritor,  
And stand a lackey in the house of pain!"

"Who wrote that?" she asked, with a quick interest that was purely literary.

"You don't know it?"

"No."

"I'm glad."

"Why?"

"No matter. Tell me, why did you not acquaint me with your intended arrival in time to let me meet you at the train?"

"Oh, Mr. Savage met me at the train!"

"However did *he* know?"

"He wrote to me to Sarnoc asking if he might, and I answered yes."

"You answered yes. Of course. Quite right. It was very—very nice of Gene."

"That's what I thought."

Vaughn was not the first man to lose out with a girl by reason of too much respect for her ideals, and won't be the last. Gene had had more grit than reverence. Gene had written. Therefore had Gene got what he wanted.

Julie's very inexperience at once made her a prime favorite with the whole bunch of managers. She charmingly did what she was told, or tried to do it; and she was so naively delighted with the whole affair that she placated every one, even Carmen Clare.

No longer a novice himself, Vaughn was soon bored by the preliminary drilling into shape of his first act, and was aching to escape. But he sat through the tedious proceedings just for the sake of capturing Julie and taking her somewhere for a cup of tea and a long talk. He remembered that June breakfast in the Grand Central

café, and was amazed to note the subtlety of growth and development that even a few months can bring to a piece of femininity that is still changing from girlhood to womanhood. Faintly, very faintly, Julie was beginning to realize that within herself was lodged the most wonderful force in the world, for her to use ruthlessly or divinely, according to her will. The dawning of that new knowledge shone mystically in her glances, giving them a constant tender embarrassment that was very interesting to watch.

When the close of the rehearsal had liberated them all into the street, he placed himself at her side and walked on with her, conscious that he was receiving envying looks from every male who passed.

"And now you are coming to have a cup of tea with me, Julie," he announced, giving it a casual, cozy, pre-arranged sound.

"Thank you, but I can't," she answered. "I've promised to have supper with Mr. Savage."

"At what time and where?" he asked swiftly, with an imperious ring of authority. From repute, he knew a few damning things about Gene's late, tête-à-tête suppers.

"About six o'clock, at a place called Vesper's," she answered, mentioning a resort of quite idyllic domesticity. Then, majestically recovering her grip on the helm of her affairs, she asked very coldly: "Are you in receipt of another telegraphic commission from father authorizing you to direct my movements, Mr. Vaughn?"

He came to an immediate standstill, preparing to take his leave.

"The 'commission' to guard your welfare comes from here, Julie," he answered, placing his hand upon his heart. "And I shall always obey it when the need arises, in spite of your displeasure and of your—rudeness. Since it pleases you to go your way



No two ways about it, she had the secret of knowing how to make a man feel at home.



without me, do so. But remember it is not I, but you, who have forgotten the old days at Sarnoc and the right they gave me to wish to be your friend."

"I'm sorry I was rude," she stammered. As it turned out, she was sorry not for his sake, but for the sake of general ethics. "Rudeness is so ill bred. As Emerson says: 'A gentleman makes no noise; a lady is serene.'"

The venerable baldness of this remark—it needing a toupee worse than Kinlock—was the final extinguisher of Vaughn's zeal. If she was well off without a stock of quotations from Oscar Wilde, she was still in a very bad fix trying to get a perspective of Broadway through Emerson's pince-nez. She must just find out for herself—as all the rest of us have to do.

"But there's a kind of man who makes even less noise than a gentleman, Julie," he said in farewell.

"And who may he be, Mr. Vaughn?"  
"The thief."

With that, they parted. The week that followed was one of considerable labor for both. The rehearsals turned into endurance bouts. Every day, Hot Air insisted upon having new lines written in, most of which he repented of overnight and lopped off in the privacy of his own room. As a result, while he was peacefully sleeping, the actors stayed awake studying the things they weren't going to be allowed to repeat. But even endurance bouts come to an end; and at last arrived the First Night. There are no capitals big enough to do justice to a First Night.

The theater was packed; the audience was good-natured; the curtain calls were pleasantly numerous. Next morning all the papers gave a whole column to it. The following is a portion of Gene Savage's criticism:

The opening performance of "The Bad in the Best of Us" presented all the delightful features of a social function, owing doubtless to the fact that most of the audience were there on invitation. The play is the work of that rising young author, Aubrey Vaughn. He has been young and rising for so many years that the difficulties and faults of that trying estate seem to have settled upon him. Those who were pleased with Mr. Vaughn's work in the past will be equally pleased with this, for it offers us no dangerously new features, but clings faithfully to the old. Even the epigrams appeal fondly to the memory, reminding us of things "we have loved long since and lost a while."

Miss Carmen Clare as *Elsa* acted quite as well as she ever acts, and consequently succeeded in satisfying her admirers, except perhaps the few who went there with higher ambitions for the young woman than could be fed by simply seeing her appear in a set of stunning new gowns—deafening new gowns, one might almost say.

If Miss Devine could only get over the terrible boredom the audience seems to afford her, and waken to the fact that the feeling is reciprocal, she might exchange her *laissez-aller* air for one more complimentary.

In justice to Mr. Carroll, we must say that he brought out everything that was in his part—which was absolutely nothing.

The evident sincerity of purpose of Miss Julie Blue, her unspoiled youth, and her rare beauty, gave to the silly part of *Theodora* a sufficient reason for being; and that, in itself, it did not possess in the faintest degree.

The play as a whole deals dabbingly with a serious moral question that ought to be handled without gloves or not touched at all. To stir up a vile pool with no other purpose than just to make the bystanders gasp over the liberated malodors of it may be an inspiring occupation for a small boy with a long stick, but is one that ought to pall in time upon an author, even a young and rising one.

There was a great deal more, but it was all in the same vein. Between Gene and his intimates there existed a grand theory that the dramatic critic and the man were two entirely separate individuals, of which the one was never under any circumstances to be held responsible for the utterances of the other.

So nobody dreamed of showing hurt over the playful little things he did with the ink when duty called him, but kept on inviting him to dinner and supper just the same as ever. And this was right, all around. For no critic can damn a play to its death unless the public generously assists him.

And in the case of "The Bad in the Best of Us," the public generously assisted the slayer by keeping away in greater and greater numbers, till, at the end of a losing four weeks, the play was taken off; and arrangements were made to send it on the road as "the tremendous Broadway success."

Vaughn went to call on Julie to see how she was standing the experience.

"Yes, sir, Miss Blue's home, sir," answered Mrs. Curtis, when he asked. "She's always at home, sir, when she's not out," went on the landlady, giving it as a rather extraordinary thing. She ran up one of the window shades a full inch, nipped a dead leaf from a palm and put it into her apron pocket as if saving it for the soup, then left the room, saying: "I'll tell the little lady you're here, sir."

Left alone, Vaughn theorized smilingly on the "little," for Julie was tall. But he well knew what Mrs. Curtis meant. Julie, who could be so high and haughty with the fortunate, always held herself sweetly low to those whom misfortune had placed socially beneath her.

Now, when she came into the room, her face was vivid with sympathy.

"Mr. Vaughn, I am so sorry for you, so very sorry," she said, marching to him like a soldier and squeezing his hand in a comrade's true grip.

From the others he had received so many plaintive hints of their being the sufferers, not he—of their being even the victims of his literary presumption—that he went quite to pieces at this remark, dropping suddenly into a chair and turning his head to stare at a palm until recovery set in.

"Don't be discouraged," she went on swiftly. "It's in you to succeed, and you're going to do it yet."

"God bless you, Julie!" he choked, bewildered and even horrified to find how completely unmanned he was. He had braced himself to give pity, not to receive it. Not till now had he known how he craved an understanding word. "You're the first one to think of *me* in this catastrophe."

"It is not a catastrophe to have a poor play fail," she said, seating herself. "Excuse me for calling it poor——"

"All my friends have that privilege," he reminded her bitterly.

"You must not blame Mr. Savage," she said, going straight where he had gone sideways. "What Mr. Savage wrote was quite right."

"Quite right?" he echoed, made furious by the color that came and went in her cheeks at mention of Gene's name. "You're learning fast, Julie! Learning to champion both sides at once!"

"He was right," she maintained. "Wrong, perhaps, in saying it so flipantly—though that is more the fault of the readers who want just such silly stuff—but right in finding very little to praise. He praised *Theodora*——"

"Because of the player!"

"Think again, Mr. Vaughn. The audience praised it, too."

"Also because of you, Julie."

"I'm not sure, Mr. Vaughn. They praised it because it is a *good* part."

"Good morally?"

"That way and every other way. You did not take it from a book. You created it yourself. Your gift is character drawing. Do you remember asking me at Sarnoc what did *not* bore me, the time you were writing this play? I did not answer then. I don't know why. Often, I can't talk to you, but never know why. Now—to-day—I dare. The things that did not bore me, that seemed worth while, were the

scenes of your own and the speeches of your own."

"Julie, you're a—well, a trump! You'd put backbone in a worm!"

"Won't you write a good play and get it all out of your own head?"

She asked this childishly put question in a tone of intense pleading.

"To promise to do it and to be able are two different things."

"With you they are the same."

"The public are not looking for a 'good' play from *me*."

"Then surprise them by giving them one; by giving them one that will make them cry, make them laugh, make them say to themselves: 'Why, I have thought those very things, and done them!' yet at the same time suggest something kinder than they have yet said, better than they have yet done."

"Are you forgetting that it takes genius to portray the grandeur of common lives?"

"No, I am remembering it, Mr. Vaughn."

Profoundly touched by her unexpected faith in him, he simply said: "I promise at least to try, Julie." Then he turned the subject, and talked with her about her probable experiences on the road, advising her where he could, and being glad to find out that she was looking forward to it all as to a treat.

"Are you going to let me write to you?" he asked, in conclusion.

"Certainly, if you have anything to say."

"That is how you would have answered a bill collector!" he commented roughly.

"Mr. Vaughn, are you still taking that frightful stuff you took up at Sarnoc?"

"When it is necessary," he replied, stiffening virtuously, as we all do when a pet sin is tapped disrespectfully.

"It is *never* necessary!" she cried. "Oh, how I hoped you had left off!"

"Why didn't you give me the incen-

time?" he asked moodily. "If you had answered me differently that day—beside the lake——"

She rose hurriedly.

"I won't stay to let you finish," she said, in anger and sorrow. "I don't ever want to remember *you* in connection with a coward's excuse."

And that was their real leave-taking. A few more days, and she and the rest of the company were off on their long Western tour. For a few weeks he stuck faithfully to the promise made her, working early and late upon a comedy drama of domestic life.

The plot was of the simplest. A whimsically sweet, unworldly man of great wealth finds himself suddenly published as beggared and bankrupt, owing to the failure of a trust company. His chief anguish is at being obliged to break this news to a bored society wife and an uncompanionable, idle son and daughter, dreading their contempt and further alienation. To his almost unbelievable joy, the three rally around him as they had never done in affluent times, making him the idolized center of a simple home. The wife takes delight in a gas cookstove, a thing that has hitherto been the abused toy of the servants alone. The son and daughter are glad to go out into the world and work. In the meantime, the trust company has righted itself, and he is richer than ever, but too happy to dare say so, and too afraid of spoiling the democratic, romantic love marriages the son and daughter are delightedly tumbling into. The terrible secret of his restored wealth is at last accidentally let out; but all manage to survive it, having indisputably found their true selves during the ordeal of poverty that love has made no ordeal at all.

Half the time, Vaughn was tickled to death with his new-found faculty;

the other half, he felt that it was babbling trash.

At one of the worst of these latter times, Vicky Dalroy telephoned that she wanted to see him. And he went.

Her apartment was always a pleasant place to visit. No two ways about it, she had the secret of knowing how to make a man feel at home.

"Turn around three times and curl up in that chair," she said coaxingly as to a canine. She was already curled up in hers—extremely pretty beaded shoes upon her feet, very becoming earrings in her ears. Between them was a tiny inlaid table holding the best of wine and the choicest of imported cigarettes, one of which fumed in her shapely hand. "Tell me the last damnable thing you've been doing to yourself."

"Sitting looking with adoration at a pure white marble statue labeled 'Decency,'" he answered, filling a glass and selecting a smoke.

"Well, that *is* damnable! Nice sort of view for *you* to be taking!"

"A cat may look at a king."

"But would feed higher if it watched a mouse hole. That brings me to my point. Aubrey, I want to write a play with you—a problem play. I've got the plot. It's corking."

"Friend Gene didn't do a thing to our other corking play, did he?"

"He said it failed because we handled the themes with gloves. Well, we'll fool little Genie this time—we'll handle it without gloves. Want to hear the how of it?"

"Certainly. Nothing entertains me more than listening to you say things that should never be said. Fire off your plot, Vicky."

She fired; and she got him, for the plot was audaciously new. That very night, he shoved the old manuscript aside and began upon the second one.

# The Girl at Copperdip

By Marion Short

Author of "Catching Up with Life," "The Famous Cochran Children," etc.

ILLUSTRATED BY CLARENCE ROWE

**The way of a man with a maid has been declared to be beyond understanding. And what of the way of a maid with a man? This story, so touchingly pathetic, so romantic, and so truly original, is a new variation on an old theme.**

WHAT stirred up 1608?"

In order to answer the question, the guard of cell block 9 tiptoed across the stone floor to the warden's desk. There was no necessity for caution, but McCarty's occupation had long since fastened on him the habit of wariness and stealthy steps. Warden Nickerson noted the fact with the keenness of observation he brought to bear on all prison phenomena of convict and keeper alike.

"Speak up, McCarty," he said pleasantly. "There's no one listening."

"Yes, sir." The guard's lips scarcely moved and his voice remained halfway down his throat. "Tuesday, middle of the morning, he stopped work in the carpentry division and began staring at the floor. I asked if he was sick, and he shook his head 'no.' I told him to get back on the job and take up his tools. But he said he'd been at it until he was turning into a tool himself, and wouldn't. I couldn't budge him, so he's in solitary."

Nickerson consulted a chart at his elbow.

"Hm! 1608 is that cowboy ranchman, Streeter. I've had my eye on him, and expected an outbreak of some sort. Get him and bring him here."

"Yes, sir."

McCarty selected a cell key from the bunch on the big steel circlet on his wrist and went from the room with the

quiet ostentatiousness of a deacon carrying a contribution box down the aisle.

When 1608, in answer to the summons of the guard, came shuffling out of the gloom of the solitary, his big black eyes were even more mutinous than when he had been placed there, and though McCarty carried a short-nosed revolver in the hand opposite the one that wore the key ring, he discreetly marched the insurrectionist along ahead of him until they reached the warden's door.

"Here he is, Mr. Nickerson."

"How do, Streeter? Won't you sit down?"

The salutation was received in utter silence, not even the flutter of an eyelash betraying that the prisoner was not as deaf as he seemed.

"Take those bracelets off him, McCarty," continued the warden, appearing not to notice the cold sullenness of the young offender's demeanor, "and then go. I'll let you know when I need you."

Nickerson was busily engaged in sorting some papers and spent several moments in pigeonholing them before he spoke again.

"When a man's work cuts away too long at one spot in his brain, it's apt to put him in a temper of revolt. I mean to shift the jobs of the prisoners in time to relieve the present condition a little, but meanwhile—— Well, the





The salutation was received in utter silence, not even the flutter of an eyelash betraying that the prisoner was not as deaf as he seemed.

long and the short of it is, Streeter, that there's a team and wagon belonging to Stone Gate in use at the Red Gulch quarry, and as we need the horses, I've concluded a couple of days' freedom won't do you any harm, and that I'll send you after them."

The considerate tactics of the new warden were so entirely different from those of his predecessor in the big Western prison of Stone Gate that 1608 was startled out of his pose of stoical indifference, and his gaze descended from the blank spot on the wall to the level of Nickerson's own.

"Didn't you know I'd been in solitary?" he stammered amazedly.

"Yes, I know, but I didn't send for you to talk about that. Do you want the job or not? That's the question. And it's up to you."

1608 gulped heavily, a sudden mist softening the hard glitter in his eyes.

"I don't know," he answered with slow monotony. "I've got so used to this place that I can't imagine what a taste of the open would seem like. I'm stone. I don't know."

"Well, here's my plan," continued Nickerson practically, choosing to assume that the prisoner's answer meant assent. "I put you in citizen's clothes, supply your railroad ticket to Mountainville, arrange for you to ride horseback the rest of the way, and stake you for all expenses on your return. You are to bring horses and wagon back by the valley road. No one will be with you, and there will be nothing to prevent your making a get-away but your sense of honor. But I'm not afraid to trust you if you can trust yourself."

Streeter squared his shoulders, the last vestige of sullenness driven from his face by the light that flooded it. The warden was treating him not like a criminal, but like a man! His wounded and bleeding self-respect looked up and smiled once more.

"I'll bring back the team all right, Mr. Nickerson, if you're willing to take the word of a convict."

"It's settled, then. You go."

Together the two men went over a map showing the topography of the country between prison and quarry, Streeter showing by his comments that he was familiar with it all, and especially with the hundred-mile course of the valley road.

They were very different types of humankind, warden and prisoner, as they stood there, and offered a sharp contrast to each other. Nickerson was almost boulderlike in the bulkiness of his figure, and there was that in the personality of the man which suggested both strength and calm. The younger man was tall, lithe, sinewy, with volcanic eyes and in his movements something akin to the restlessness of leaping flames.

"Maybe it won't be easy, boy," the warden said when the conference was over, "to come back after you've sampled freedom again, but if you find yourself going wild, just say to yourself, and keep on saying it: 'The warden trusted me, and I've got to give him a square deal.'"

McCarty, originally a warm-hearted Irish lad, easily affected to tears, during his ten-year service at Stone Gate had become so immune to the sufferings of the unfortunates about him that he could be inwardly smiling over the antics of the youngest of his brood at home even while his eyes rested on some white-faced wretch beginning his march to the death house. The spectacle of a man walking from solitary almost straight out of the prison doors, how-

ever, was so exceedingly novel as to jar him into disapproving attention. Discipline was undoubtedly better, with Nickerson in charge, than it had been under the régime of the retired warden, but a man can't be a Presbyterian and change to a Methodist all in a minute, and McCarty's conversion to the new order of things was about as difficult. After Streeter's departure, he forgot himself to the extent of actually speaking out loud as he entered the mess hall.

When the train moved away from the station at Stone Gate, a man at Streeter's side pointed out in the distance the great gray wall beyond which the prison loomed as formidable as a fortress.

"See that big building over there? That's Stone Gate Penitentiary. I don't know whether you know anything about it or not, but the new warden is making the place practically a reformatory. He allows the prisoners special privileges and all that sort of thing. Some of the newspapers back him up in his policy; others call him a sentimentalist and all kinds of a fool. You've heard about it, eh? Well, in my opinion, it can't be exactly a cinch at best for a man to be shut away from all that makes life worth living—home and kids and all that." He opened his watch and passed it over to the taciturn young man. "What do you think of that for a bouncing baby boy?"

Streeter, relieved at the change of subject, jogged his brain for the usual words to say in the case of fond parents exhibiting their offspring, and said them. It all seemed a dream to him yet, his unaccustomed freedom; like more than one that had come to him in his cell, only to end in a start of awakening and the feel of a cold wall against his cheek, the fragrance of the out-of-doors changed into the horrible, musty prison smell that once known can never be forgotten.

"A year and a half old," continued the boastful parent, confident that such an attractive subject must interest his seatmate as much as himself, "and said 'daddy' at ten months as plain as you or I!"

It was not until Streeter stepped out onto the station platform at Mountainville, and saw his departing train running blithely away from its own smoke, that he began to taste the joy of his respite. He drew great drafts of the clear, bracing air into his lungs, while his eyes took in every detail of his surroundings; nothing was too mean—not even a stack of empty oil barrels piled by the tracks—to interest him.

Half a block up Mountainville's one street was the smithy where Nickerson had told him a mount would be waiting to carry him to the quarry. The leather-aproned individual in charge stopped shoeing a horse long enough to lead out the one Streeter was to ride, then unconcernedly went back to his work. To him the caller was merely an employee of Stone Gate en route for Red Gulch on some official business or other.

Fifteen minutes from the time the rider wheeled for the start, he found himself out of sight or hearing of anything human. Not a house or tree or fence or even a trail was in view, only the immensity of the sage-covered hills. Neither was there call of animal or bird, no sound other than the gentle thud of the horse's hoofs.

How sweet the stillness was—the free stillness! It was entirely and blessedly unlike the quietude that sometimes settled like a pall over the prison, broken perhaps by the sinister sound of a sliding bolt, a clanging chain, or the stifled cry of some wretch to whom a period of rest brought only a clearer realization of the pit of misery into which he had fallen. This was a natural silence encompassing him about

with the friendly intimacy of old-time associations.

His gaze reveled in the changing colors of the magnificent old mountains, gold and rose in the sunshine, with a gauzelike blue haze settling softly in the shadows. And because of his sensation of content, other related images of things held dear came back to him. The arch, sweet face of Pansy Day peeped at him through the azure veil yonder gladly, sadly, lovingly, coldly, coquettishly, as had been her willful, fascinating, maddening way.

The glint of to-day's sun on her red-gold hair! He caught his breath quivering at thought of it. How he had loved to thrust his fingers into that mass of crinkles and perfume and feel it close about them like a sensate thing!

And now he seemed to see her, light as a bit of thistledown before a prankish breeze, floating down the long hall in that last dance at Copperdip. It was only her beauty he was remembering; not the tragic fact that her thoughtless waywardness that night had caused a stranger to make the slurring remark he had resented at such cost. Never, at any time, had he held the girl responsible for the gun play between him and the man who had misjudged her, though his sentence of eight and a half years for manslaughter was the aftermath. To him it was a man's quarrel settled after a man's fashion, that was all.

Pansy, his Pansy, soon to be the wife of another! Had he not turned over in the grave of his dead hopes when he heard of it? Phil Caxton, the richest mine owner in the State, was the man who had supplanted him in the girl's affections. He touched spur to his horse. He must not sadden these few precious hours by allowing his mind to follow that tortuous trail!

Sheriff Bill Olmstead, looping his long legs over the veranda rail, awaited Page Streeter's arrival at the Red



He paused, his eye caught by the figure of an approaching horseman. A moment later, Page Streeter reined in a few feet from the door.

Gulch Hotel. He had received notification of it from Warden Nickerson several hours before.

The sheriff was in one of his most unpleasant moods. The week previous, an escaping cattle thief had disabled his trigger finger with the butt of a whip, following it up by a blow on the head that had stretched him insensible in the middle of the road. To-day was the first one out of bed since it had happened.

"I wouldn't have minded the injury so much," he confided to Hillis, the pro-

prietor of the hotel, who, a few years before had struck town as a consumptive school-teacher in search of health and had found it, to his great delight, "if it hadn't led to his making a get-away! That hurts my pride! I don't believe in Warden Nickerson's new-fangled notions of treating criminals like white men. When a fellow transgresses the law, he should be made to pay for it with interest, say I. Wait till I nab the thug that handed me this!" and he pointed to the bruise on his forehead. "Life ought to be made harder

for the wrongdoer, not easier. That's the way I'd dope it out if they made me warden. Now take this Streeter case. What's he done to be let out for a picnic excursion? And what's to prevent his taking to his heels and running off, team and all? His wild-eyed kind is just the sort to undertake it. What's to prevent it, I say?"

"Nothing, unless it's Streeter himself," answered the hotel man, deferential, though of different mind. "I know Warden Nickerson—we were at college together—and he's a pretty good judge of human nature. If he saw fit to send this chap after the team, he'd sized it up pretty well he'd picked a safe man."

"Well, he'll find out yet that giving so much rope to a convict is liable to wind up in his turning round and hanging the one that furnished it. I don't believe in all this coddling." He wound up with an outburst of profanity, having given his sore finger a blow against a veranda post.

Hillis smiled and tipped his chair back against the wall. He enjoyed an inoffensive argument with the sheriff, although they seldom agreed.

"Olmstead, I've seen a good many convicts and ex-convicts in this rough patch of land, before and since Nickerson got into power, and I believe with him that the more you treat a man like a dog, the more he'll snarl and bite when he comes out into the community again; and the more you treat him like a man, the more he'll act like one when freed, providing always, of course, that he isn't crazy. And having studied the subject quite a bit in my own way, sheriff, I'd rather welcome the man than the dog sort when a cell door opens to send a prisoner out into the world again. They're safer for society in general."

"You school-teachers can talk a blue streak when you get started," snorted Olmstead contemptuously "but that

doesn't prove you're right. And I want to tell you——"

He paused, his eye caught by the figure of an approaching horseman. A moment later, Page Streeter reined in a few feet from the door and flung himself from the saddle with the easy grace that had first attracted the fancy of Pansy Day. The sheriff was as tall and strong and muscular as the new arrival, but jolty and angular in his motions. Pansy Day, long ago, had laughed at him for twice treading on her toes in the course of a dance, and the jealousy of Streeter's youth and grace that had entered his soul at that moment had given a tinge of secret satisfaction to his feelings when he had been called upon to put the young ranchman under arrest, and, though he would not have acknowledged it even to himself, made him wish to strew thorns in the boy's pathway now.

"Mr. Nickerson gave me instructions to get your O. K. to this paper before presenting it at the quarry, Mr. Olmstead, and I'll be obliged if——"

The prisoner from Stone Gate hesitated and flushed a bit under the hard stare of the officer of the law, who did not offer to relieve him of the document in his outstretched hand, leisurely setting his long teeth into a plug of tobacco instead.

The young fellow caught the cool insolence of the sheriff's intent and dropped his arm to his side. The flush in his cheeks rose to his hat brim, and instinctively he clenched his fist. But he managed to restrain himself, knowing that Olmstead would be only too willing to enter a fresh charge against him if opportunity offered.

Finally the tobacco was returned to its owner's pocket, and two rigid fingers reached out and nipped the paper between them.

Streeter had once said of Olmstead that a huge plug of tobacco would be the most appropriate tombstone his



friends could erect in his memory. The sheriff was never known to be without one. It accompanied him as faithfully as his gun. His fingers and teeth were stained with it, and even the whites of his eyes had a yellowish look. The odor of it hung about him now as he spoke.

"So you've come by yourself all the way from Stone Gate, eh?"

"I have."

"Ain't afraid of forgetting the way back, I reckon?"

The sally was not pleasantly made, or pleasantly received.

"I'm not here to talk about my personal affairs, Sheriff Olmstead, but to put through the business I've been sent on."

The sheriff spat sideways and passed a cleansing thumb across his chin.

"Well, if you're not here to talk about your personal affairs, that doesn't hinder other folks from doing it if they like. Your affairs happen to interest me, considering your past record. And I want to say right now, my young buck, that if I had the say-so instead of your warden, the slayer of Jim Peters wouldn't be swaggering around here like a cock o' the walk. He'd be traveling back to Stone Gate in handcuffs, instead, to serve that seven-year balance of his sentence."

"Evidently you're looking for trouble, sheriff. Sorry I can't oblige you. I happen to be representing somebody else, so I can't."

Olmstead, realizing that his hand had been called, turned and set the official paper against the buff boards of the hotel and signed his name, mumbling profanely as he did so, and a moment later he and the landlord were looking after Streeter, galloping down Main Street hat in hand.

"Wears his hair as long as he likes instead of their cropping it close to his head," complained Olmstead, after a few silent waggings of his busy jaw.

He ruefully rubbed his hand over a very considerable bald spot, with the vague feeling that if justice reigned, he would be disporting Page Streeter's thick raven locks, while the malefactor's hatless head would be brightly reflecting the rays of the noonday sun.

The first real smile that had crossed Streeter's lips since leaving Stone Gate was occasioned by the sight of the tiny colt that was to accompany the team and wagon back to the prison. Its legs were like thin stilts, and it had a comical, uneasy look as if it wished to lower its body from the stilts to the ground, but didn't quite know how.

One of the horses was out at pasture and it took some time to corral him, and it was well along in the afternoon before everything was ready for departure.

Sweet, damp, fresh odors from growing gardens filled the air as the team passed through the residence section of Red Gulch. There were home-loving women in the unattractive town who had sought to brighten their surroundings by patches of old-fashioned flowers. These garden spots were a pleasant sight to Streeter, and he turned for a lingering backward look at them as he left their vicinity.

Sheriff Olmstead, calling to consult with a deputy as to the pursuit of the cattle thief, was standing in the window of one of the rose-embowered cottages and noted that backward look, as Streeter drove toward the valley road. Instantly he was alert, suspicious, eagerly so. Why had the convict gazed so searchingly over his shoulder at the town he was leaving? There was no one to wave a hand to him or to care whether he came or went. Was it not that he wished to make certain that he was not being followed?

"At one point the valley road almost touches the State line," said the sheriff, revealing his suspicions to the deputy. "Some joke if Nickerson's bird flew



"This very night, and forever, I give myself to you, body and soul—all to you, if only you do what I ask and take me with you!"

for the tall timbers while out of his cage! Anyhow—a little trailing will do no harm, and I want you to come with me, Gleason."

The day grew hazy toward its decline, and a deep red rose slowly over the surface of the sun until only a hint of pale yellow rimmed its apex. It looked like a Chinese lantern set to illumine valley and hill. Later, when the silver lamp of the moon was shining instead, the expectant sheriff and deputy, drawing rein in the shadow of

some mountain brush, saw their quarry deliberately turn his wagon off the valley road, but, to their amazement, in exactly the opposite direction from the one that led to "the tall timbers."

"What's the fool up to, anyhow?"

Olmstead was chagrined, disappointed, but there was a ray of hope to console him.

"Anyhow, he's left the line for Stone Gate, and he's no call to do that. There's something got in his craw that hasn't any business there."

"Maybe he's just heading for a road house for a drink," offered the deputy. "There's one between here and Copperdip somewhere."

"Copperdip!" Olmstead grasped at the word and repeated it triumphantly. "Copperdip! You've struck it, my boy!"

The sight of a teamster with his hat pulled well down over his eyes is not an unusual one, and two or three of Streeter's old acquaintances looked at him without recognizing him as he drove his wagon through the arc-lighted square of Copperdip and on into the tree-bordered street beyond.

The big white house that was the home of Pansy Day had been freshly painted since her lover had last looked

upon it, and broad verandas now surrounded it, taking the place of the small entrance porch formerly before the door.

A chill feeling of strangeness crept over Streeter as he stopped his wagon under the shadow of the big trees across the road, a feeling like that experienced the first night in his cell at Stone Gate, a feeling that the old, familiar, beautiful world had revolved itself forever away, and that one of spinning strangeness and unfriendliness had taken its place.

There were new tenants of course, he concluded, and Pansy, with her Uncle Ben, had taken up her abode elsewhere. While he had stagnated in prison, outside people had come and gone, had sought change and found it, and Pansy among them. He had been a fool to yield to the temptation of looking once more upon the roof that sheltered her; worse than a fool to imagine that he might even catch one heavenly, torturing glimpse of her through a lighted window to carry through the dark years ahead of him.

A lamp burned dimly somewhere at the back of the house. Blue leaf shadows played fitfully about the darkened window that had been Pansy's.

How often in those old glad days had his sweetheart leaned out to call to him some laughing word at parting, disappeared, and blossomed forth a second time at the soft bird-call signal agreed upon between them!

The whinnying of the colt recalled him to the practical duties of the moment, and he went back to see that it was still properly tethered to the wagon. Standing beside it there in the gloom, almost unconsciously he pursed his lips and sent out the old familiar trill.

Silence! The dancing leaf shadows fairly mocked at him!

A great wave of loneliness arose to drown his heart. With a gesture of

boyish grief—for the prisoner from Stone Gate was still scarcely more than a boy in years—he put his head down on the neck of the awkward little animal beside him and closed his eyes. It seemed to him that he had never felt so utterly hopeless and forsaken of God and man, even in his darkest prison hours, as he did at that moment.

"Boy, boy, I heard your call! I knew who it was! They've set you free, and you've come back to me."

A white-clad figure, panting, palpitating, flung itself down the garden walk, across the road, and into his arms, almost before he realized what had happened.

"Pansy!"

An ecstasy that was almost agony overwhelmed him. She was giving him her sweetness once more, yielding her flowerlike lips to his own, her fragrant hair blinding his eyes. His senses swam.

"Again, again, girl!" he cried.

It seemed that he could never let her go. He had been dead so long, and now he was alive, alive!

"Oh, Page," she cried gaspingly, struggling away from him at last, "why didn't you let me know before that you were free?" And so the descent from the mountaintop of his hopes began.

They were seated now on the wide, shallow steps of the veranda, and it was some moments before he could bring himself to answer.

"I didn't hope for one moment that I might hold you in my arms again, Pansy," he said slowly at last, "but it has happened, a touch of heaven. And now—I'm going on."

"Going on—but where? What do you mean?"

"I mean—I'm not pardoned, dear, and I'm driving back to Stone Gate now."

Briefly he explained the errand he had performed, pointing to the team in verification of his words.

"And the thought of you, Pansy, drew me here on my homeward way."

"But, Page," she cried, a thrill of pain in her voice, "if you came back to me only to say you must leave me again, why, it's cruel! Horrible! Oh, you don't have to suffer imprisonment any more! I won't let you! They opened the door! Whose fault but theirs if you keep your freedom, now you have it?"

His answer was gentle, indulgent, almost as if he had been speaking to a child.

"Troubles aren't escaped so easily, sweetheart. I forged my own shackles and I've got to wear them, even if they do seem a bit heavier at times than I think they might be."

She gave a pitiful little exclamation, passing tender fingers caressingly along his wrist.

"I should be wearing shackles, not you! It was my foolishness that forced your quarrel with Jim Peters. And what good is it going to do anybody for you to waste away in prison for what was all my fault, when you might be leading a man's life outside?"

She arose and stood before him, clasping her hands and extending them toward him.

"Page, suddenly it's all as clear to me as if I saw the visible finger of Fate writing it. Those horses were never meant to carry you back to prison! No—but to take you away from it as far as you can get, instead!"

"Don't, Pansy, don't! I couldn't be a coward and a runaway—you ought to know that."

"But it isn't cowardly! It's brave to risk everything for a chance to live the life you were born to! You've put Stone Gate behind you—you're as done with it as I am with Phil Caxton since I've seen you again!"

"Caxton!"

Streeter lurched to his feet with a harsh little laugh.

"I'd forgotten him, forgotten him completely! I'm glad you reminded me that there's another man. It brings my senses back."

She flung herself against him tumultuously as he tried to step past her.

"I'm done with him, I say! I never wanted to be engaged to him, but I was lonely, and he pursued me so! But now I know I can never go on with it. It's you, just you, or no one! Listen, listen to me, dear! No, you needn't try—you can't loosen my hands, my arms! They cling, they cling! I love you, love you so much that I'm part of you, of your very being! That's why I'm asking you to keep your freedom, because I want to be with you! Wherever you go, I'm going, too, if it's the other end of the world! There isn't any right or wrong about being born or dying, and there isn't any right or wrong about our claiming our one chance at happiness! Ah, Page, you do love me, don't you? And think what it means—that this very night, and forever, I give myself to you, body and soul—all to you, if only you do what I ask and take me with you!"

"She's got him!" breathed the sheriff to Gleason.

Their horses were tethered around the turn of the road, and they had worked their way along so cautiously that now they were crouched behind the hedge within a few feet of the unsuspecting pair.

"She's got him, sure!"

The deputy shuddered. He was young enough and romantic enough to pity the wretch from Stone Gate, and the steely gleam of the sheriff's eyes were as formidable as twin revolvers aimed straight at the heart of the sorely tempted man.

And now Pansy was talking again, this time almost gayly.

"And we'll have all the money we need. Uncle Ben is dead, and he was richer than any one dreamed of—"

Olmstead gave an uneasy start and held his breath, for Streeter's voice arose indignantly.

"Your money, a woman's money? No!"

But Pansy clung to him and would not let him go.

"Until we get safely beyond reach of capture. That's all I meant, dear! But I'll go without a penny, if it pleases you—take my chances, starve, die with you, if it comes to that! Just to be with you, whatever happens, that's all I ask!"

A few moments later a light flared out in an upper room, revealing to Olmstead and the silent watcher beside him glimpses of Pansy's bright head and graceful shoulders as she made hasty preparations for flight.

Page Streeter stood alone, motionless, halfway down the garden walk where she had left him.

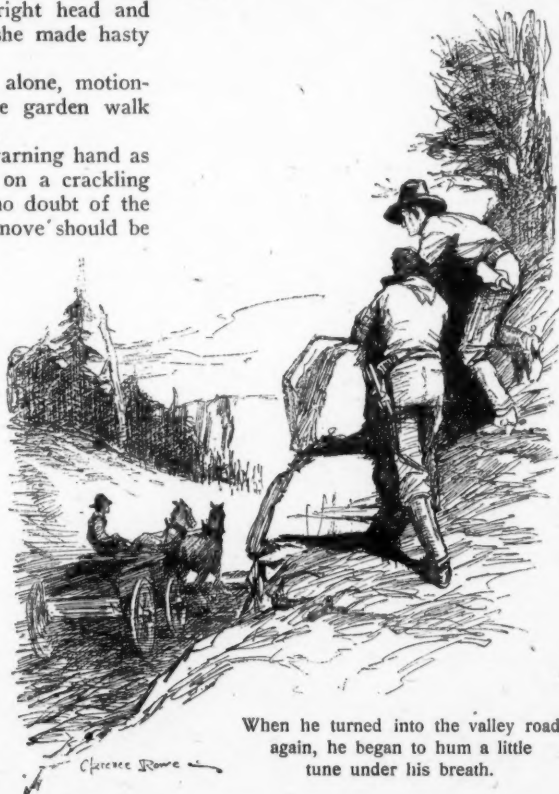
Olmstead put up a warning hand as his companion stepped on a crackling twig. There must be no doubt of the prisoner's intent. No move should be made to seize upon him until he had begun his flight with the girl and they had him, in the sheriff's vernacular, "dead to rights."

The spell of Pansy's magnetic presence withdrawn, Page Streeter had time to think. Lost as he had been in a revel of wild, sweet emotion, where "Thou shalt not" spoke so faintly as scarcely to be heard, the return of sober reason brought with it something that, consciously or unconsciously, he had

barred from his mind during all of his interview with the girl. But now in front of him, in spite of himself, loomed the calm, fine face of Warden Nickerson, and clear as bell strokes he heard the warden's words:

"But if you find yourself going wild, just say to yourself, and keep on saying it: 'The warden trusted me, and I've got to give him a square deal.'"

Those bell strokes repeated themselves until their clangor rose into the din of an insistent danger signal. The warden's clear eyes looked deep into his shrinking soul and called it to stand on its feet and answer his look like a man!



When he turned into the valley road again, he began to hum a little tune under his breath.

Clarence Rowe



Pansy was laughing, half hysterically, as she struggled across the veranda and down the steps to Streeter, lugging an overfilled bag.

"There! That's for you to look after!" she cried, as he sprang to relieve her of its weight. "Why, what's the matter?" for he carried it back and set it against the door, and then re-joined her.

"The matter is that it's all over, Pansy. I can't do the thing we planned. I've got to return to serve my seven years, as the warden expects. I hate myself that I ever thought of doing anything else."

"And hate me, I suppose?"

Amazement, hurt pride, anger, made her voice tremble.

"Maybe you'd better think so. Anyhow, it's good-by."

Already he was making preparations to turn the wagon about. Pansy hesitated a moment, then followed. A flood of words rose to her lips to wash away Streeter's resolve, but she could not speak them. He moved as if in the grip of some unseen destiny, and she knew that she was beaten, that her hour for swaying him had come and gone.

"Good-by, Page. I love you for being so strong, for not giving in to me. I guess a woman always does, when it comes to a deep-down test. But I shan't marry Caxton. I'm going to wait for you that seven years. Yes, I am! I can be strong and noble, too, and I'm going to wait."

Streeter was quite ready now for the start. He took the girl's face between his hands and looked long into her pansy eyes. She was very beautiful

there in the moonlight, glowing in the white radiance of her spiritual resolve. He wished to remember her so! But he knew her like a well-studied book; he knew that in seven days, without his visible presence to remind her, her seven years' resolve would begin to weaken. The flowers of emotion sprang richly from the soil of Pansy's soul, but there was no ruggedness there, no rock upon which to build. He kissed her forehead, but without passion, feeling already the wall of separateness that was to grow between them.

"I'm yours, Page, and will be waiting for you when you come back. Don't forget."

"I won't forget—anything, Pansy Day."

He climbed into the wagon and drove away without a backward look.

When he turned into the valley road again, he began to hum a little tune under his breath. It was only a common, popular song he had known before the shadow of Stone Gate had fallen across his path, but it grew louder and louder as he sang until it took on as martial a sound as the hymn a soldier sings, going into battle!

Sheriff Olmstead surprised his aid as they jogged back slowly toward Red Gulch. It seemed that there was a spot of real humanity hidden somewhere in his tobacco-soaked being after all.

"I've got an appointment to see the governor next week, and when I do see him, I'm going to put in a word for Streeter. Seven years is a long stretch for a boy to serve that's as game as he is. Game! That's the word. He's proved it. And Jim Peters was only a pizen pup, anyhow!"



# The Joyous Joke

By Kay Cleaver Strahan

Author of the "Peggy-Mary" series, etc.

ILLUSTRATED BY R. VAN BUREN

**The happy story of a man who reached "the grand climax of his fooldom" on the night he had planned to elope with Dianthe.**

IT began in August, under a crooked moon, and on an Oregon shore of the Pacific Ocean. When it was over, the moon was just as placid, and the ocean went curving and crashing on. It was a dull old story to them, but to Nelson Rutledge it was keenly, agonizingly new. Dianthe Lovelace thought it funny—that this commonplace, bespectacled man should have offered her his heart to keep. She did not want it, of course, so she spun it like a top for a while and laughed—and went back to the dancing up there at the big hotel, leaving Nelson alone with his heart, down on the sands.

The trouble was that he was a shy, sensitive little man who had spent his life in but two worlds—business in the daytime, books in the nighttime—so he did not know very much about living, beating hearts. He did not even know that his own heart was like himself, shy, sensitive, without assumptions. So he railed at it for a time for venturing paradise, and then he decided that it was a wrecked, battered thing to be ashamed of, and hid it away as only shy men can hide hearts, and locked it tight with a foolish, futile laugh, and went back to his home in the Western city, and back to his books, and back to his business in life, which, incongruously enough, was the insuring of other people's property against breakage and fire and damage.

The oddest, hardest part of it came

when he found that, after all, nothing was different. The sun kept on shining; the moon kept on changing its shapes; people kept on having things insured; the telephone bell kept on ringing too often; everything kept on just the same.

If Nelson had been possessed of much money, instead of a mere comfortable income, he could, of course, have gone away to some place where things would have had to make themselves different—Tahiti, for instance, or Nome, or Teheran. But the only way he could be assured of even the comfortable income was by staying right in his sixth-floor office and earning it. Because he had never been very rich or very poor, he was afraid of poverty. So he stayed right on in the office, and hated it, and thought he hated everything in and about it, including the brown-haired little stenographer, whose name was Mary Morrison. She was a woman, wasn't she? And women did things to men's lives—hollowed them out as they would an apple they were going to bake, and left them empty, coreless, and laughed about it, and continued to one-step.

Besides, what right had any woman to be so small and meek as Miss Morrison was, or to have such absurdly big, scared-looking brown eyes, or to be so tryingly timid? He used to wonder whether she really could say anything at all besides: "Yes, Mr. Rut-

ledge," "No, Mr. Rutledge," and, "I am sorry." Everlastingly was she sorry. If he complained of anything, from the heat to the hiccups, Miss Morrison was contritely, monotonously sorry.

Dianthe had never been sorry about or for anything. That was the entire trouble, of course. But still—if women had to be at all, why couldn't they be exactly like Dianthe? Dianthe, tall, fearlessly candid, gloriously, almost gaudily blond, with her clear, unafraid blue eyes!

August cooled into September, and September bronzed into October, and October misted and grayed into November, and, after that, the world was more hateful—or hurtful; they are just the same—than ever, for the months rained steadily, sloppily on and on as they do in western Oregon winters.

Because Miss Morrison was sorry each morning when Nelson snarled at the weather, he decided, definitely, to discharge her and engage a man. But he didn't. Because he couldn't. It takes a very brave person to discharge a little brown-eyed stenographer for no reason at all. He used to practice his speech sometimes in the night, when Dianthe's glorious blondness was refusing to allow him to sleep:

"I am sorry, Miss Morrison——"

No, he wouldn't say that; she was always sorry enough for both of them. "Miss Morrison, I regret——"

But! She was probably supporting an invalid mother or putting a knobby little brother through school. Girls of her sort always had incapacitated families, didn't they? The mother and brother began to get on his nerves. Tremendous, horrid responsibility for such a little girl as she was! No wonder she had a hunted look in her eyes. So, finally, he decided definitely not to discharge Miss Morrison. He compromised by raising her salary.

Twice during the winter Nelson saw

Dianthe. The first time he saw her she was getting out of her limousine, radiant, red-cheeked, starry-eyed, wrapped in furs and topped with a long white feather. She left something behind her in the limousine; a something who wore a fur overcoat and carried a cane. She went into a shop.

Half an hour later was the second time he saw her. She came out of the shop, radiant—and the rest of it, smiled at the fur overcoat, got into her limousine beside it, and whirled away. She had not seen Nelson. He had been standing behind a sheltering pillar.

"Can you tell me, Miss Morrison," said he, when he went into his office a few moments later, "why a man who rides in a limousine should carry a cane?"

"No, Mr. Rutledge," answered Miss Morrison, with a smile that, if she had been a bit more plump, would have developed a dimple.

"I thought you couldn't," said he.

"I'm sorry——"

"Sorry I thought so, or sorry because you don't know?"

Miss Morrison did not answer. She shook her head in a baffled, embarrassed little way, and smiled again, and blushed poppy pink.

That was what Nelson had been waiting for. In each man there is something of the bully. All his life he had been shy; at last he had found some one more shy than he was. He had discovered that by simply carrying on a "follow-up" conversation with Miss Morrison, he could make her face turn from white to pink. For some unaccountable reason, he found it fun. Anyway, she looked better when she blushed. Her cheeks, when they colored so, were about the shade Dianthe's were at all times. He had never seen Dianthe blush. Odd how transforming those blushes were! He stood and watched Miss Morrison's and wondered about it. Stood, in fact, until

Miss Morrison turned and sent her clawlike little fingers tripping over the typewriter's keys.

Not long after that Nelson read, in an entirely ordinary-looking morning paper, that Mr. and Mrs. Kellogg Lovelace announced the engagement of their daughter, Dianthe, to Count d'Something-or-other. Nelson couldn't pronounce it, but he couldn't forget it. He knew about the count; not all about him, merely enough about him. He was an indigent count who gave dancing lessons. Nelson felt very sorry for Dianthe; and for some utterly intangible reason, he seemed to feel a little bit sorry for the count; and for some very tangible reason, he felt sickeningly sorry for himself.

That, perhaps, was why he told Miss Morrison about it, told her like this:

"Miss Morrison, the girl I love is going to marry a shyster count and a dancing master."

"Not both?" said Miss Morrison.

That was disconcerting. He had expected her to say, as usual, that she was sorry.

"They are one and the same," he answered.

"I am sorry," she said.

"Sorry? Why?" he asked, waiting for the poppy-pink blush.



She left something behind her in the limousine; a something who wore a fur overcoat and carried a cane.

It came as she answered: "Sorry because you must be sorry."

Now, after all, that was a pleasant, satisfying thing to hear. It was rather nice to know that there was some one in the world who would be sorry simply because he was sorry. Nelson, right then, was glad that he had not succeeded in discharging Miss Morrison.

And again, when the Oregon February had dwindled reluctantly into a soft-aired gray-and-silver March that held just the faintest tinge of spring about it, Nelson was glad that he had not discharged Miss Morrison.

It was a lonesome evening, as such

very early spring evenings are apt to be; exactly the sort of evening when one likes to crowd one's automobile with family or with friends and spin away into the outskirts of things, to discover budding trees and pussy willows.

But Nelson had no family and no informal friends, so he was riding through the city streets, watching people and wishing that in all that hollow place there were something different to do, when he saw Miss Morrison walking hurriedly along as if she had something very definite to do. Why not offer her a lift? She was a sensible girl. She would understand.

She was a sensible girl. She thanked him and said she'd like very much to ride as far as the children's playground. Then, instead of noticing the opened door in the seat beside Nelson, she opened the door of the back seat and climbed in and sat down there, alone.

"What do you do here?" he asked, when he had stopped outside the gate of the playground.

"Do? Oh, I just play with the children."

"I wonder," he said, quite utterly surprised at himself, "whether I might come in and play, too?"

"But surely. Come in and meet Ki-ki. He'll love you forever——"

That sounded good, to be loved, even by a Ki-ki, forever.

"—if you'll give him a nickel," finished Miss Morrison.

"Oh!"

Ki-ki proved to be a rather battered, very dirty baby boy, who would be "free next June." But he was accomplished beyond his years. He could swear as sturdily and stupidly as a sailor, and he did it.

"His ways," apologized Miss Morrison, "aren't babyish, exactly, but how cunning he is!"

And, as Nelson agreed with her, he noticed that her eyes had lost their

frightened look; he noticed that, in spite of the fact that they were brown when they should have been blue, they had a distinctly merry way of crinkling up at the corners. He noticed that he liked the way she lifted Ki-ki into her lap and cuddled him up and mussed his stubby hair and asked him how much kisses were selling for that evening.

Kisses, that evening, were "a thent."

So Miss Morrison took five cents from her hand bag and said she would buy five. And, as Nelson watched the business transaction, he had no notion that subconsciously he was ruminating on what a ridiculously easy, pleasant way that Ki-ki fellow had of earning money.

He decided that he would take five of Ki-ki's kisses, at the same price and—at once.

Ki-ki was scornful. Kisses, it seemed, were not for men. Nelson sighed, and said he had found it so, and contributed the money for peanuts. Whereupon, Ki-ki, who had been gazing beyond, pointed a grimy finger and inquired:

"'Oonellsatorterlongto?"

"What did he say?" appealed Nelson to Miss Morrison, as men always appeal to women to translate baby talk.

"He asked who in—the world that auto belonged to."

It ended, of course, in an invitation, and an application to Ki-ki's mother, who could not leave the other children to go riding herself, but who was entirely willing for the kind gentleman to take Ki-ki riding if the lady would go, too, and hold Ki-ki in.

So that was why, evening after evening during the beginning of spring, Nelson took Ki-ki riding and took Miss Morrison along to hold Ki-ki in. So that was when he began to discover things about Miss Morrison, almost interesting things. For instance, that she had a humorous sense of humor. For



instance, that down at the base of her white throat there was a wee, soft-seeming hollow place that looked as if it should hold something—sweeter, better?—well, at any rate as if it had been made for something very different from that heavy old-fashioned locket. For instance, that when the sun shone on it, there were dancing, shining red lights in her shadowy brown hair. For instance, that he rather liked the way she had with her hands as she walked, as if she were clasping other hands in hers and leading little stumbling folks along. He often found himself wondering why some man didn't fall in love with her, because she was truly a lovable sort; some man of course who had never known Dianthe. Why, he himself, if it had not been for Dianthe— But it had been for Dianthe, very much for Dianthe.

March had left and April had entered when Nelson saw Dianthe again. Some childish whimsical remark of Miss Morrison's had set him to wondering how old Miss Morrison was, anyway, and about her queerly quirk-some mind—if that was the reason he found her so interesting, so different from other girls—when she rapped on his office door and, without waiting for a by your leave, walked in.

She? No, not Miss Morrison. Dianthe. Dianthe dressed in dull gray that italicized, as it was designed to do, her blond beauty. Dianthe, who wore orchids and not violets in April. Dianthe, who dangled her pearl-studded vanity case as carelessly as she had dangled Nelson's heart. Dianthe, who said:

"Nelson, do you still love me?"

"I shall always love you," he answered gaspingly.

It was a ready-made answer; he had been telling it to himself during all the dreary months, and if, of late, he had forgotten to repeat it quite so often, he

had by no means forgotten the words themselves.

"Then," she said, gazing at him straight with her fearless blue eyes, "would you be willing to marry me right away?"

"But—but—the count? What about him?"

Dianthe laughed, a brittle little laugh.

"There's quite a bit about the count. You knew that he was managing the kermis?"

No, Nelson had not known it.

But, at any rate, he had been. And that morning he had left town too hurriedly and had taken with him all the funds that had been raised to carry on the kermis. He had left her a letter in which he had stated the truth, quite baldly—he had known that she would not care to tell: He and papa had been having a wretched quarrel about settlements.

"So you see," went on Dianthe lightly, "it will be very ugly for me when the truth comes out. I'd like to be married before that happens. People may think, then, that he ran away because I jilted him, and not that he jilted me." At any rate, Dianthe was frank.

"But—you—don't—love—me—at—all—then?" stammered Nelson, feeling exactly as if he had stepped into quicksands made of pure gold.

"Well—of course I'm fond of you, Nelson. I've always been fond of you, you know"—Nelson did not know—"and probably—that is, perhaps—the gratitude I'll feel toward you for helping me now will, in time, change into what people call love. I came to you"—and for the first time Nelson saw how provokingly sweet Dianthe could be when in an appealing mood—"because I needed you and I knew that in case we find we have made a mistake, you wouldn't—put objections in the way of—righting things."

To all that she said, Nelson ac-



"His ways," apologized Miss Morrison, "aren't babyish, exactly, but how cunning he is!"

quiesced, perhaps because he scarcely heard anything she said. He knew, simply, that Dianthe, glorious Dianthe, was sitting there beside him in his office, making cool, decisive plans for their elopement that evening.

After she had gone, Nelson stood for a long time by the window staring down into the busy, uninterested street. How fast they bobbed about, down there, those funny little people living in this odd world, where, after all, things did happen, things that could

change in just an hour one's entire attitude toward living! That morning he had been—wretched, of course. This evening he was happy. He had always known that to marry Dianthe was the one thing that could make him happy. He was going to marry Dianthe. Therefore, he was happy. The syllogism was too complete to admit of argument. His one quarrel was with the emotion itself. Happiness, he had always supposed, was a warm, radiant thing; this was merely a cool, dim

nebulousity. He felt cheated, disappointed.

Bobbing umbrellas began to appear in place of the bobbing people in the street below. The window out of which he was looking grew cloudy with raindrops. He was sorry. Miss Morrison and he had promised Ki-ki a ride that evening. Then he remembered; smiled at his moment of foolish forgetfulness; turned and rang the bell for Miss Morrison.

"I'm afraid," he began as she came into the room, "that we'll have to give over our—Ki-ki's ride this evening."

"Maybe it'll be just a little shower," she urged, pleading for Ki-ki, not for herself.

"Yes—I know. But you see I— Or, rather— That is to say, I have another engagement for this evening. I mean—I'm going to be married this evening to Miss Dianthe Lovelace." Now, why, why, he wondered, had he said just that?

"Oh," Miss Morrison managed. And then, "But—I thought—there was a count—"

"She's changed her mind about the count."

"Oh," said Miss Morrison.

Nelson waited for her to say something else.

"I'm glad," she said at last, after an interval that was almost too long.

"Glad?" Nelson echoed, but there was a note of surprise in his word. Had he expected her to say something else?

"Because you must be glad," she explained hurriedly. And then, as quickly as she could have put on a gray gingham apron, she put on her customary reserve and her businesslike manner. "If you'll give me your instructions," she said, "I'll take them down." She opened her notebook.

"Instructions?" questioned Nelson dazedly.

"You'll be away for a while—on your honeymoon?"

"Honeymoon?" said Nelson.

His conversational ability seemed to have limited itself to echoes. Miss Morrison waited, notebook in hand.

"About Pope & Jackson's business?" she prompted at last.

"Let's see—" hesitated Nelson.

"Well— Oh, let it go!"

Miss Morrison raised her big brown eyes. Astonishment was surely written in them, and Nelson imagined, too, that he saw disapproval there.

He was annoyed. What if the Pope & Jackson business was important? What if—anything? Wasn't he going to marry Dianthe and go on a honeymoon with her? Honeymoon—sort of a silly-sounding word! Though of course Dianthe would want it; they were always done. The trouble was that his bank balance, right then, was rather low. Dianthe wouldn't understand about things of that sort, he was afraid. Dianthe—

"And the Orcutts'—" began Miss Morrison.

"Oh—let 'em all go."

"Is that all, then?"

"Quite all."

Miss Morrison said something about congratulations and being happy, said something about good evening, and slipped out of the room. Nelson was not attending. He was searching for his check book. A minute or so later, he heard the door of the outer office close. He jumped to his feet. By Jove, but that was a queer way to do! To go right off like that without a word! She would be waiting for the elevator, probably. He would—

Midway to the door, he stopped short. After all, why shouldn't she go? Why did he care? He had nothing to say to her. Wasn't he going to marry Dianthe? Wasn't he happy? Wasn't he—

He returned to his desk and opened

his check book. The result was unsatisfactory; the balance was lower than he had supposed. But probably that was— Possibly Dianthe might understand.

He looked at his watch. There was plenty of time; he was not to meet Dianthe until ten. He was tired. Might as well sit there in the office and rest for a while and get things planned; sort of card index his mind before he started out. That was the efficient way to do. No good rushing about. First, of course, he must go somewhere and eat dinner. He did not feel in the least hungry, but that was no matter. One must always eat one's dinner.

The janitress entered noiselessly. He did not want his office cleaned. No! He did not want it cleaned. He did not care one hang about the rules of the building! He would not have his office cleaned! She departed, less noiselessly than she had come.

The telephone bell shrilled, insistently. It was past office hours, so no one should be calling him then. He snapped a rubber band about the bell, muffling it completely, and resumed his mental card indexing.

First, of course, he must have dinner. He wasn't hungry, but then— No, he had gone over all that before. Jove, how his head ached! That was the trouble, of course. First, perhaps, he had best take a headache tablet. He did so. He took two headache tablets, waited a full minute for results, and took one more. Odd how that headache persisted! But he must get down to his plans. There were a number of things he must attend to—dressing, packing his bag, but first he must have dinner.

He was sorry, though, about that bank balance. It would be hard to explain to Dianthe—Dianthe, tall and so gorgeously blond, with those great, wistful brown eyes and that little soft-seeming hollow at the base of her

throat— He pulled himself up sharply. But how could any man be expected to think clearly with his head whooping away like that? He opened the box of tablets. Two were left, and he took them. Now surely that howling in his head would stop. Then he would go somewhere and have dinner. He wasn't hungry, of course, but— In the meantime—

His head drooped forward and down on his desk. Gently, monotonously, the rain splat-splattered against the window; the sounds from the busy street down there were growing softer and lower, more harmonious. How happy he was, after all! He was going to marry Dianthe, Dianthe, who was sorry because he was sorry and glad because he was glad—

Dianthe, who was shaking him by the arm and saying over and over in a tiny, frightened voice:

"Mr. Rutledge! Oh, Mr. Rutledge!"

He opened his eyes. The room was full of clear white daylight. Sunshine was glinting red in the brown of Miss Morrison's hair.

"I'm so sorry!" she was saying.

"You're ill! You—"

"What?" he asked blinkingly.

"What has become of last night?"

"It's morning now," said Miss Morrison, and her voice held in it the same crooning quality he had noticed sometimes when she spoke to Ki-ki. "I'll call a taxi, and you can go straight home and rest."

"Yes, I know. Yes, I know it's morning now. But I mean—what has become of last night? Last night I was going to marry Dianthe, and—you see—you understand I—I haven't done it. There'll be a row," he added ruefully. "An awful row! What am I going to do about it?"

"There, there!" said Miss Morrison. "Now—now! It will be all right."

It seemed to Nelson that she was quite overdoing that crooning quality.

"I asked," he said sternly, "what am I going to do about it?"

Miss Morrison's lips rounded as if preparing for another "Now, now," but Nelson forestalled it.

"I must do something," he insisted.

"Try," crooned Miss Morrison, "to sort your thoughts out. Try to remember all about it—just what happened last night. Try to remember."

Nelson stared in astonishment.

"Only—there's nothing to remember," he said.

"Try," pleaded Miss Morrison.

"I'll not try," he snapped, "because there's nothing to remember. I've been asleep—that's all. I took too many headache tablets. It couldn't be anything else," he argued, "because the last thing yesterday, I was here, and the first thing this morning, I—am here."

"Of course," agreed Miss Morrison, "but try to remember. You were out in the meantime——"

"I was not," said Nelson. "No—I was not."

It was Miss Morrison's turn to stare.

"You aren't saying," she managed, at last, "that you've been right here asleep—all that time, and that you—don't know?"

Nelson was saying that. As for knowing, he knew nothing.

"I'm sorry," began Miss Morrison, "but, you see, the morning paper says



"Yes, I know. Yes, I know it's morning now. But I mean—what has become of last night?"



that Miss Lovelace was married last night."

"It must be a mistake," said Nelson dully, "because I have been right here. I——"

"Not to you," explained Miss Morrison, "but to a Mr. Alfred Stahl."

"Jove!" ejaculated Nelson, and again, "Jove!" adding, "What a reserve force that girl must have had!" adding, "Poor old Stahl!" adding, "Thank the Lord!"

If his last words had appeared suddenly emblazoned on the opposite wall, Nelson could have been no more astonished than he was at hearing them issue from his own lips.

The door closed softly. He looked up. Miss Morrison had gone into the outer office. But why should she run off like that? He wanted her, right there, to look at. He wanted her, right there, to talk to. He wanted her—great Heaven, how he wanted her!

He sprang to the door and opened it. Miss Morrison was standing beside her desk. Her back was to him, but her shoulders were quivering. At first he thought she was crying, until a tiny tinkle of laughter floated across to him.

For an instant he was amazed; for an instant he was angry; then his own laugh rang out tumultuously.

She turned.

"I'm sorry!" she gasped. "But it's a— a funny situation!"

"It is," he agreed, and continued to laugh.

"For a man——"

"To go to sleep——"

"And then wake up and ask what has become of last night—— Oh, I do apologize! I—— But you did blink so——"

Like two silly children, caught by a giggling fit, they stood there and laughed at each other. Until something different in Nelson's eyes caused Miss Morrison's laugh to dwindle, caused the poppy-pink blush to start and

spread slowly clear down to the soft-seeming hollow place at the base of her throat.

"No," she protested, for no reason at all seemingly.

"Yes," he insisted, drawing her two hands from behind her and covering them with his.

"Not—that way——" she stammered.

"This way," he answered. "It's funny, howlingly funny, that for the past year I've been a blind fool; that I reached the grand climax of my fool-dom last night, and capped it with an absurd anticlimax this morning. I'm glad you laughed about it and made me laugh. I can't explain. It's no good. No one could understand. But last night I was off my head with wretchedness. To-day—to-day I know why. It's you I love. It's you I want for my wife—just you! Please—as she turned her head away—"please don't laugh about this! Please don't think this is funny!"

"But it is," she answered softly, "kind of funny. For me to wake you up and tell you that you have forgotten to marry one girl, and then——"

"Don't!" he said. "Please don't!"

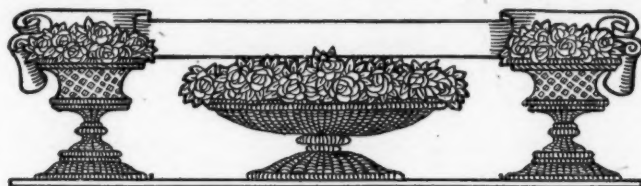
He dropped the hands he had been holding and let his own fall to his sides. It was odd how consistently he played the fool. He should have waited—a month longer. But it had come to him so suddenly, this miracle of his understanding, that he had forgotten circumstances, forgotten everything; had known only that he loved her and must let her know.

Spring fluttered in through the open window as if trying to cheer him, as if trying to tell him that, just over there, were pink currant blossoms and bees, yellow violets and green-white dogwood flowers; birds and music, love and hope. Her message was meaningless to him; he was a joke, a fool. He started to turn away.

Two hands fluttered to his shoulders and rested there, as if trying to detain him. He looked down. Two brown eyes met his, eyes that had caught the tidings of spring in their depths and were offering it to him, with much besides of a grave, sweet seriousness.

He could not fail to read their message. He was loved! He reached out and drew her close.

"Dear," she said, "my dear! It's such a joyous joke! Just funny enough for us to laugh about all the rest of our lives together."



### MAINTAINING THE HOME

A NEW YORK newspaper once published a symposium on "What is Woman's Greatest Need?" Men and women of all shades of opinion contributed to it, and the things that woman was described as needing ranged all the way from love and babies to scientific education and the habit of self-assertion. "To know her own limitations" was the answer given by a prominent anti, according to whom woman's one mission is to maintain the home. No matter how well fitted she is for other things, she must not do them. To men must be left the development of personality, the joy of self-expression and achievement; and all women, born for one purpose, must be cast in one mold. She ends with some such words as these: The poet Tagore tells of seeing a woman whose wit and beauty could have brought kings to her feet humbly sweeping the doorstep of her house, and thus beautifully symbolizing the devotion of woman's self and all her powers to the obscure, but basic, task of maintaining the home.

When put in this way, it almost sounds beautiful. But is it? And is the home something that demands such fearful destruction of mental and spiritual values? We seem to remember a parable in which he who hid his talent in a napkin was chidden by his master, while he who had made it increase was greatly praised. And lest it be objected that this moral is not for women, let us remember also the story of Mary and Martha—how Martha looked well to the ways of her household, never sparing herself, but Mary, who sat at the feet of the teacher, was she who had chosen the better part.

Our friends the antis hold that as their highest ideal which to us seems a tragic mistake. The woman of to-day feels in herself great latent powers. To use and develop them has become to her almost a religion. The home will not suffer through her higher development. We have every reason to think it will benefit. Cleaning your house with your own hands does not make it a home, any more than having it done by machinery prevents it from being one. What we have in mind when we speak of the home as vital and sacred is not a thing of bricks and mortar. It is a spiritual reservoir for the development of the race. And the woman who is most fully a human being, most active in thought and deed, most capable in many directions or in one chosen direction, will put far more into the home and get far more out of it than the conscientious drudge whose horizon is bounded by its four walls.



# The Lie

By Beatrice Rogers

ILLUSTRATED BY E. C. CASWELL

The third of the series of problem stories now running in SMITH'S. Did this girl do right or did she do wrong? How would you have acted in similar circumstances?

MOTHER and father both died the year I was twenty-one. Father had never been very successful, and died without leaving a penny. I learned afterward that, in the financial crisis of that year, he could have saved a good deal for himself and for us if he had been willing to lie about certain securities. He was not willing, and everything went.

Dreadful as it was to be without money, I think I was a little proud of my poverty. I lived up to the standard father had set. He himself would rather have been poor than have lied. I was glad to remember that he had taken it for granted that I, too, would rather be poor than have had him lie. I took up stenography as a step to better things. I hoped eventually to secure a position of trust. I felt that I was worthy of it.

It was not long before I was in the employ of one whom I shall call Mr. Edgeworth, a prominent lawyer of our city, a man of thirty-five or six.

I was advanced rapidly from a minor position to what was a position of confidence and trust, that of private secretary to Mr. Edgeworth himself. He had watched me, it seems, had tested

and proven me when I little suspected it, and had not found me wanting in the qualities of trustworthiness that he especially desired.

"I have dealt much with women," he said to me, "and with men, and I find integrity a rare quality. Almost every one will lie to you some time about something—but I believe you are a woman who does not lie."

"I never do," I said simply, and I took the liberty of telling him about my father, and that I was glad and proud to be my father's daughter, no matter how poor.

My relations with Mr. Edgeworth were pleasant. He was kind and considerate. He was a very fascinating man, too, in his own way. I thought there was something clean and honorable and well poised in his handsome head and broad shoulders. At any rate, there was something that gave me confidence in him.

There was something delicately bitter, almost cynical, in the fine lines of his mouth, something steely and critical in his eyes; yet there was a kind of shadowy, whimsical smile which came now and then that changed all this and let you see the sensitive

warmth and kindness of him. I found myself watching for his smile, in time wishing for it.

Acting as I did as his confidential secretary, many things in his correspondence and in his daily affairs brought me a more intimate knowledge of my employer, and the more I saw of him, the more I respected and liked him. Here was a man I could honor and respect, a man who had little lovelinesses of nature that showed among

selves. He used sometimes to grow very impatient about it, and when some of his women clients could not see the wrong of some slight misrepresentation, and were willing to tell "white lies," he got quite beside himself.



"Mr. Edgeworth is not here," I said.

his sterner qualities as the whimsical smile showed across his stern, fine face.

Much of his legal work had to do with the settlement of insurance claims, in which, as he expressed it, there was "unmatched opportunity for lying." For even trifling claims, it would seem, people were willing to perjure them-

"More lies!" he said one day, flinging down a client's letter on my desk. "Now that woman in the McGowan case! Why, in Heaven's name, are women like that?"

He walked away. In a moment he came back.

"You mustn't mind my ill temper.

They wear me out and vex me past all patience, these women. Most women are, I believe, like that. But thank Heaven, you are not! Thank Heaven, I've got you to depend on! You haven't lied to me yet!" The little whimsical smile came into his face. "Please don't!"

"I am not likely to," I said.

"It may seem to you odd," he said, "but I wish you would give me your solemn promise that never, the longest day you and I live, will you lie to me! I really would like to have that promise."

I smiled a little at his whimsical mood.

"I promise you," I said, looking frankly into his eyes.

They had seemed to me before sharp, keen, wonderful eyes that searched you; now they seemed beautiful besides, eyes that trusted you.

Looking back now, I know that that was the beginning of all that followed—that promise of mine and the look that we exchanged over it. Here was more than an agreement and an acceptance; here was a binding together of ideals. His ideals of honor were my own; his hatred of lies a kind of bond between us.

## II.

With different ideals and a different inheritance and training, I suppose I might have deceived myself for a long time. But since it was my nature not to lie to myself, any more than I would have lied to others, I soon faced what I could not deny—that Mr. Edgeworth, in a way all his own, had become essential to my happiness. His presence, his approval, his manner of doing things, little lovable, memorable ways he had, the sound of his voice, his step, all these had come in a short while to be inexpressibly dear.

Well, I faced that, too, without cheat-

ing or lying. I was in love with this married man. I called myself a fool—mad—everything else that I thought I well deserved to be called.

Of course it occurred to me to give up my position, but I decided against this. I knew I was, just at that time, invaluable to Mr. Edgeworth in his work. My love for him was of course quite a hopeless thing. It was a love doomed always to be without return. That was a truth which must be faced squarely. Should I slink away from the experience and make him the loser because, forsooth, I was unable to endure and face this thing day by day? That seemed to me a small and an unworthy way of meeting the issue.

I decided to retain my position. But let me be truthful about this, too. I did this for two reasons: first, in consideration of him and the service I could render him, and second—you see I really was truthful with myself—for my own happiness.

My life had not been a very happy one. I found a joy in seeing the man I loved. Other women have loved without return; I could, too. There would be no question of deception. He need never suspect. You may think this a very unreal affection—but it filled my days, nevertheless.

I used to please myself with picturing imaginary scenes with him. Suppose, even, that he should guess the truth some day. I hoped he would not; but suppose he should. I could see myself in that case holding to my old ideals. I would not lie about this either. If the necessity came, I would admit to him frankly that I loved him. Then I would push the truth farther still and add:

"But I am no fool. I do not cheat myself. I can never be anything more to you than some one who serves you honestly. Well, I am content with that. It is no one's affair but my own."



## III.

One day after this, when he was away in court, I looked up from my desk and saw a woman standing in the doorway of his office. She closed the door softly behind her and came toward me. She was slight and would have been very pretty but for a nervous, white look she had.

"I am Mrs. Edgeworth," she explained, in a nervous, hurried way. "It's only a fancy of mine, but I wanted to come. I do not wish Mr. Edgeworth to know. You will not tell him. You are not married, so you do not know. But it gets fearfully dreary at home sometimes, and we wives long to know a little of the lives of these men who —" Her voice trailed off and she looked apprehensively at the door. "You will not mention to him——"

I rose, trembling a little. I could hardly have told why.

"My first duty is to Mr. Edgeworth," I said. "I never deceive him. If he asked me about your visit, I should probably have to tell him. But he will probably not ask."

She looked at me in a puzzled sort of way.

"Would you?" she said. "I see," she added, almost wistfully, "you do not understand."

In a few moments more she left.

I do not know why her face haunted me as it did. I had always suspected that he was not happily married; now I seemed to know it. Also, it seemed to me that I knew why. She was not trustworthy. She was probably tricky in a hundred little ways, as women so often are, and he was a man who could not tolerate a lie.

The next day the telephone bell rang. He stopped me as I was about to answer it.

"If that is Mrs. Edgeworth at the phone, tell her I am not here."

Something in me seemed to stop.

The telephone bell rang again.

"You mean that you wish me to lie for you?" I said.

He flushed, but his eyes were steely cold.

"Have the goodness to carry out my orders."

The bell rang again. I took up the receiver.

It was his wife's voice:

"Is Mr. Edgeworth there?"

His eyes were on me keenly as I spoke.

"Mr. Edgeworth is not here," I said. Though I spoke to her, my eyes were steadily on him.

She did not give the customary good-by, but hung up the receiver.

With no show of feeling beyond silence, I went back to my work, and he to his. But it seemed to me the world had fallen apart. He, it seemed, was no better than the rest. He could lie also, he who had placed such value upon truth! I thought with shame and hot cheeks of the promise he had exacted of me that I would never lie, he who could lie so glibly to his wife!

## IV.

This thing lay between us like a sin, almost. Sometimes it seemed to me I must speak to him about it. At other times I felt sure he would speak to me of it. My faith in him had had a blow from which it seemed to me it could never quite recover.

It was some days after this that he spoke to me quite abruptly of it.

"There are times, I am convinced," he said, "when it is right to lie."

"I believe I cannot talk to you about that," I said rigidly. "I am here to carry out your orders."

"You are here," he said, his face white, "as my confidential secretary. What I have need to ask you is whether you still trust me or not."

"No," I said quietly, "I do not. I used to."

He got up and walked across the room, and then back again, then away. Then he turned and faced me. There was just the least hint of the old smile that I loved, but it shone only an instant and then left his face haggard.

"I see. It becomes necessary, then, to tell you a few things." He came and stood before me. "It becomes necessary to tell you that I hate a lie as much as I ever did."

I looked away, out of the window, with a distinct sense of endurance.

"You do not believe me," he said.

"The answer to it is," I said as quietly as I could, "that you have lied."

"I know," he said gloomily. "But you leave out of your reckoning that

there is such a thing as self-preservation."

I did not answer.

"Mrs. Edgeworth is exceedingly high strung and nervous."

"Other men have had wives who are high strung and nervous, I believe."

"She is of an exceedingly jealous disposition."

I made no answer.

"She is beset by a thousand jealous fancies."

Still I did not answer.

He flung the next sentence down:

"She is exceedingly jealous of you."

I could feel the blood mount up more hotly in my cheeks.

"There has never been, and there never could be, any need of lying between you and me. There is no reason you should not know the truth. On the contrary, there is every reason that you should know it." He paused; then he said slowly: "She has, perhaps, good cause for jealousy." Again he paused, keeping his eyes on me the while. Then he continued: "I am more fond of you than I am of her."

The blood was beating in my temples now and in my wrists. This, this I had never imagined. He continued, like a man who, having made up his mind, means to go to the far limit of his resolve:

"I love you as I can never love her."

We can live thousands of years, it seems to me, in a single instant. In that instant I saw the whole situation as vividly as they say the past flashes on a drowning man. This was the truth. He had lied to her, but this was indeed the



He was bending my head back and pressing his lips hotly on mine.

truth that he was telling me. He loved me. Yes, yes, I knew it now, and suddenly it seemed to me I had known it always. There were a thousand evidences that in the past had testified to it. Though I had ignored them before, I knew them now. All in an instant, I seemed to know that I was his, wholly his, by some law deeper, more fundamental, than the man-made ones. My employer's personality was powerful and commanding. The stoical resolve not to wish for a return of love was contrary to nature itself. Life was a brief span, love was love. My head and senses swam. I could feel my whole being melting, it seemed, to his.

Meantime only an instant had passed.

"As to the lies I have told her"—he looked away speculatively—"they are things apart from all this. They have nothing to do with all this. They meet existing conditions, that is all. A man must often do this. They have nothing to do with you and me. They relate to her and to—to certain things that must be met." He looked at me now and spoke with great directness: "She is going to have a child. Under such circumstances, she has to be protected from her jealous fancies, even if it be by lies."

The moments, oh, the moments we can live that are lifetimes! He was talking almost in an even tone of voice, but in my spirit great chasms were parting, great upheavals taking place. What had seemed a moment ago a right changed in my very hands now to something wholly different.

He continued:

"This child of hers and mine is welcome to neither of us."

"Oh, do not say such a thing!" I begged suddenly.

"You have stood always for the truth. To you I never lie," he avowed.

I waited, too wretched and miserable to speak, and not knowing what to say. But it was he who spoke:

"And you, you do not lie to me. I have your promise. I know you cannot lie to me. It is best you and I should face another and a still more important truth. Not only do I love you, but, what is of equal importance, you love me. You cannot deny it. You will never lie to me." He held out his arms, a quick, strong gesture. "You love me—you cannot deny it!"

Mental processes are too quick to be described in words. Again everything flashed on me. Old traditions, old ideals, old ancestors, perhaps, clamored in me. Truth was truth. Yes, I was indeed his! Let come of it what would! But the woman! The woman! Her pale face flashed on me. The woman and the child!

It was too late to think of them now! He had taken me to him in a kind of fierceness of passion, and was bending my head back and pressing his lips hotly on mine.

But mercifully it is never too late to think of what is right, for beyond one right thing that we have failed of lies always another right thing to be done.

I pushed myself away from Mr. Edgeworth's arms.

I loved him with all the depth of love of which I was capable. All my long-pent-up love of him was ready to pour itself out, for I was lonely—oh, I was lonely!—with a woman's loneliness. I wanted him and longed for him as a woman wants and longs for the man who loves her and whom she loves.

I could not reason coolly. I was like one drowning. I laid hold of the first thing that would save me.

"This is madness!" I said, pushing myself away from him. "What possible right have you?"

"Let it be madness," he said passionately.

"But it is a hideous mistake."

He drew back a tiny bit and looked at me, waiting.

"You have deceived yourself, cheated yourself wholly, wholly! You are mistaken—I do not love you!"

He looked stunned a minute. He stepped back a pace and then laughed.

"Oh, my dear, my dear! You are not good at pretending! The thing looks out of your eyes! You do love me!"

He would have taken me in his arms again, but I pushed him away.

"Listen to me! Listen to me!" I said. "You remember my promise to you?"

"Yes," he said smilingly, "I do, and I think you are pretending to forget it."

"I promised you that I would never lie to you."

"Yes, yes." The words were impatient, feverish. "But now you think it is your duty to lie."

"Will you let me swear to you very solemnly," I said, "that I am not lying?"

"You cannot," he said quickly, as if he had gained a point.

"Take my two hands," I said, holding them out.

He seized them almost fiercely.

"Now look in my eyes," I said.

There was little need of that, for his eyes devoured me.

My heart was choking me, but I went on:

"Now listen to me while I tell you earnestly and swear to you solemnly."

He looked now like a condemned man, not willing or able to accept his condemnation.

"I swear, as solemnly as a woman can swear—"

"Don't, my dear!" he began.

"—that I do not love you."

He looked at me still, a little as if he had received a stunning blow and was dazed.

"Now release my hands," I commanded, "and I will show you something."

He permitted me to withdraw my hands.

I wore about my neck a locket, in which was the picture of my elder brother. I opened it with steady fingers, unfastened it, and handed it to him.

"I not only do not love you, I love some one else. This is his picture. I wear it always about my neck."

Still dazed, he looked at it—glanced at it only—and returned it to me. There was a tone almost of pathos in his voice now—the pathos of a man mistrusting his own senses.

"And you are going to marry? You are sure you have not lied to me?"

"I have not lied to you," I said.

He regarded me a moment and then put his hand to his brow. Oh the little lovely movement I loved! It was more of a temptation to me than I can explain. I could have flung myself into his arms.

"I think I am a little mad," he said, still with a kind of pathos in his voice. "It's like madness, I mean, to be so sure of a thing that turns out after all not to exist. I had counted on it so, and prayed for it, you see, and then at last I *knew, knew*—I mean I thought I knew—that you cared."

This was harder to bear than anything else; not the fierce, commanding passion of the man, but this need—this need, this hunger—to be loved and understood. For, after all, that is the whole heart of a man's love, even as the whole heart of a woman's love is the need of bestowing love and understanding.

"It seems unhappy now," I said, "but one day you will be thankful; one day, when the child is born. As is so often the case, that will make a new meeting ground for you and for her. Then you'll be glad that I did not love you."

The twilight had come. I got my coat and hat. There was something quiet and chivalrous now in his every



"You mean," she said, "that you love some one, too?"

action. He was like a child who had been through some fearful thing and was too much a man, too honest, to pretend anything.

"Will you forgive me?" he said humbly and with a white face.

"There is nothing to forgive," I said. "There was some fault in me, no doubt, else you could not have thought as you did."

"No," he said, "I believe it was just the fault of my own misery, my own longing, my own great need. You see I have been very wretched——"

"But it will be very different in time," I urged, turning away from him and laying my hand on the doorknob.

"It is a foolish fancy," he said, "but here in the twilight—with the great city outside and no one here but you and me—will you say it over to me once again? It will stay in my memory and be a strength to me always. Will you say over to me: 'Ernest, I do not love you?'"

One supreme temptation seemed to follow another. This seemed the hardest of all.

But I turned and, meeting his eyes unflinching, I said:

"I do not love you." And then again: "I do not love you."

A moment more and the door had closed between us.



Mr. Edgeworth was ill after that. I was obliged to go to his house with messages and business papers, but mercifully I did not have to see him. The doctors advised that he give up work for two months and that he go South for a month at least. This gave me my opportunity. There was one other thing for me to do.

When I saw Mrs. Edgeworth one day, I told her that I had made up my mind to go West, but that I did not wish to go without training in some one else to take my position.

"Will you ask Mr. Edgeworth if this will be satisfactory? He will understand. Tell him, if you will, that I am going to the man I love. I once showed him a picture I wear always in my locket. He will understand. He will understand if you tell him, and you who

are married can understand, too, what love means to me."

She looked at me in so strange a way! Then a little light came into her face.

"You mean," she said, "that you love some one, too?"

I nodded.

I knew perfectly well what was going on in her mind. I knew she was saying to herself:

"Thank God! Thank God I was mistaken! How foolish I have been! I have been jealous of this girl, and all the while there was no need of it!"

I walked home through the foggy streets that night with a strange kind of quiet elation such as comes with work well done.

Yes, I had lied. Was I right or wrong?



### THE OLD BUGGY SPEAKS

**M**ONSTER car, you're long and limber; in the sun you flash your sheen,  
And the fanfare of your trumpet is a bold and threatening thing—  
Nay, a scornful, for you sound it like a laugh, as, proud of mien,  
Past my sober wheels you flourish, while I eat the dust you fling.

But your passengers are hurried out of breath the country through,  
Not a pause to peep in hedges where the wrens are keeping house.  
From your snort the ponies gallop, dreading what your dash might do,  
While at me they merely whicker—I should never harm a mouse.

Breezy steep and narrow byway where the wild-grape scents are spilled,  
I may take, while you're excluded. You must run while I may drift.  
Country lads and shy, sweet maidens like my easy pace and build.  
Say, Sir Car, the happiest races, are they always to the swift?

So, for all your mighty prowess and your wondrous rate of speed,  
I'm not ready to surrender, dropping through the earth with shame.  
Muddy morns I've seen you worsted—sunk, bemired, a wreck, indeed,  
While they pulled *me* from my cobwebs, dingy, slow, but sound and *game*!

RHEEM DOUGLAS.

# Romance *with a Punch in It*

By Royal Brown

Author of "Evelyn Forgets," etc.

ILLUSTRATED BY ROBERT A. GRAEF

**"A man's man, a man who can fight," was what the colonel wanted. Harold delivered the goods and furthermore initiated his future father-in-law into the pugilistic mystery of "the double cross."**

EAVESDROPPERS deserve to hear no good of themselves, but it was with no intent of playing the part that I turned into Colonel Mowbray's grilled gate and started up the holly-hock-bordered path. I was about to ask the colonel—a large man with a ruddy countenance and a bristling white mustache and imperial—for his consent to my marriage with his daughter Molly.

To Molly I had been engaged all of four hours. She had accepted me with misgivings, and these I shared. She intimated that the colonel might disapprove of me, which I considered putting it mildly. Without being over-observant, I had noticed that the colonel retired behind his newspaper and made strange rumbling noises whenever I appeared in his vicinity. The sight of me seemed to enrage him beyond all reason.

At the moment when Molly's head had gravitated toward the spot where I had hoped it would some day rest, while strands of hair—tinged with red, I must admit—floated loose before my enchanted gaze, I had mentally defied the colonel. But with the colonial columns that adorn the colonel's porch looming up in the twilight a scant hundred feet away, I felt differently. I regretted that I had not eloped with Molly that afternoon, and notified her father by wire.

From the dusk ahead came a voice—the colonel's. I paused involuntarily, although I realized almost at once that the colonel was speaking not to me, but to Molly. He has a large, full voice, which he raises so frequently in oratory that the habit has grown upon him. He can't order a steak in a restaurant without letting his voice ring out as if he were delivering an impassioned plea for the ultimate consumer.

"I confess," he announced, in a voice suited to proclamation rather than confession, "I confess that I have an Anglo-Saxon prejudice in favor of young men who do things. Your young friend may have a pretty talent for weaving melody, but I"—and here the colonel's voice surged into fortissimo con espressione—"but I would as soon have a son-in-law with a pretty talent for embroidery!"

"Dad," exclaimed a clear, sweet voice that was undeniably Molly's, "you are very unfair to Harold!"

"Harold! That's a good name for him—Harold!" I have often read the words, "the old war horse snorted." The way in which the colonel said "Harold" was, I should say, the way an old war horse snorts. "I don't know what he might be called in these degenerate days, but when I was young, your Harold would have been called a 'sissy!'"

I realize that I should have kept

right on up the path until I reached the colonial columns and there have called the colonel to account. But one seldom does what one should. I admit, with shame if such be necessary,

that I turned and passed back through the grilled gate. I felt the need of being alone for a few moments, in order to give my thoughts a chance to think.

I believe that there is a prejudice against the name "Harold"—much as there is against "Launcelot"—and that boys so handicapped by a lack of parental foresight assiduously cultivate some nickname. A lack of sociability that has always hedged me about has prevented the substitution of some such more-to-be-desired form of address.

The colonel's tone had been tinged with an unwarranted contempt, however. I protest I am not a "sissy." It is true I have never cared particularly for outdoor sports, with the exception of swimming, and this I was forced to



"Your young friend may have a pretty talent for weaving melody, but I would as soon have a son-in-law with a pretty talent for embroidery!"

give up as a result of trouble with my ears. I am devoted to the study of music and, in a way that may be open to suspicion of dilettantism, I am given to composing. I have an income sufficient to allow the indulgence of my tastes, and up to the time I met Molly, music was my chief interest in life.

So reflecting, I found myself confronting my own gate. I did not enter. Instead, I turned and started back toward the colonel's. I think my chief hope was that the colonel, who has the appearance of being apoplectic, might be rendered speechless by the mere sight of me. But when I reached the grilled gate once more, there was Molly, waiting for me.

"Let's take a walk," she said. And then, as we started off together, she added, "I—I sort of hinted about you—to dad."

"What did he say?" I asked inanely enough.

"Oh, Harold," said Molly, ignoring my question, "why can't you thrash some one—thrash him good and hard where dad could see you doing it? Then dad wouldn't think you such a——"

Molly hesitated.

"Such a sissy. Oh, I heard him!"

"Dad always shouts at the top of his lungs. I was afraid some one would hear," she said, prettily apologetic.

"Some one did—every word. I was just entering the path. I turned and walked back home and started over again."

"But if you could only prove some way that you really aren't a——"

"Please don't say it, Molly," I interrupted hastily. "The spot where that strikes is getting sore. It wouldn't make any difference, anyhow. The colonel's objection isn't to me—it's to the fact that I want to marry you. He'd oppose any man that tried to take you away from him."

Molly's mouth drooped, and she gave a tired little shrug of her shoulders.

"It puts me in a perfectly impossible situation," she said. "I can't bear to go against dad's wishes. I'm all he has."

"Well, you are all I have," I said, feeling, and unquestionably looking, quite dismal about it all.

"But you haven't had me yet."

"No—and never will have, I suppose," I affirmed gloomily.

"Not unless you'll do something!" she flashed.

"Be reasonable, Molly. I'm no prize fighter and have never pretended to be. I couldn't thrash a man if I tried. I'd get thrashed myself. Whatever put that idea in your head?"

"Dad said that—that he'd hoped, if I ever did get married, I'd at least pick out a two-fisted, hard-hitting son-in-law for him. Then I thought—But of course it was foolish."

"Of course it was," I agreed. I was quite relieved that she had come to see her suggestion in that light.

Molly turned upon me, her mouth mutinous, her blue eyes angry.

"It wasn't! It was a perfectly good idea! I'd—I'd be ashamed of myself if I were a man and—and there wasn't a man anywhere in the world I could lick!"

I bowed stiffly.

"Very well," I retorted, in high dudgeon. "If that is the way you feel about it, I suppose I may as well—remove myself from your presence."

Molly said nothing. She simply gazed off in the opposite direction. There was nothing for me to do except make good my threat.

"This is good-by, then?" I hazarded, as we came to the grilled gate.

"It is," she said, and turned away.

This, I reflected with bitterness, was our first quarrel, and we had been engaged all of five hours! If a whim of

her father's could so quickly part us, then we were better parted. I was determined that I would strive to forget her.

In my study, to which I retired in pursuance of this high purpose, Molly's photograph, framed in silver, met my eye—an imperious Molly, with small, graceful head imperiously poised. I took a cigarette and reached for the matches. The curiously carved little holder was a prize I had won at bridge at Molly's. I picked up a magazine and opened it. There, before my eyes, was the story that Molly had asked me to read because "it was so sweet."

Everywhere I turned, there stood Molly's ghost. For three days I promised myself that I would never capitulate. But I lied, and my heart knew that I lied. It was simply a question of time before I would fashion some perfectly unassailable excuse for going where I could see and be near her.

After dinner, on the third day, I made it. I would take her the photographs and the other little tokens of her that I had gathered in from time to time and that I cherished. Then, when she showed some feeling, as she must, I would talk to her, sensibly and reasonably. To quarrel this way was childish.

I was almost happy when I went to my study, simply because I knew I was to see Molly. But as I began to gather up first her brief notes, which I dared not read, and then the other souvenirs, as poignant and less easily evaded, foreboding filled my heart. Suppose Molly should not be reasonable.

The very thought was harrowing. Before me was the tiny snapshot of her, the first picture of Molly I had ever possessed. I remember how I had begged for it, and how exalted I had been when I had had the wit to cease begging and boldly take it—and how I had gone home with it tucked in my pocket, and how long I had sat gazing

at it before I finally switched out the light that night.

*Molly wasn't home!* This was a catastrophe I had not contemplated. The maid was determined that I should leave the package I carried, and I, dazed, let it pass from my grasp.

"I'll tell her you called," she promised.

I started to drag the lead weights in my shoes down the path. At the gate, I met Molly, returning from the village. Her gaze was so utterly self-possessed that my heart sank.

"I—I returned your letters—and things," I explained.

"I'll send yours over by James," she said.

It was very evident: Molly didn't care for me and never had. At least, not the way I cared for her. Else how could she talk so calmly about returning my things to me—by James? I told her so, in a wholly unpremeditated outburst.

"You—you can't love me very much," she replied.

I knew what she meant. I no longer wanted to talk reasonably or sensibly. All I wanted was Molly.

"I'll—I'll do it!" I told her.

"Do what?" asked Molly, her blue eyes resolutely fixed on the grilled gate.

"Put the—punch in romance."

But it was not for a very, very long time after that Molly let me have the package back. I threatened to camp on the front-door steps until she should, and at last she capitulated. I walked home with it hugged under my arm, conscious that Molly had shamelessly proved her ability to wind me around her little finger. But I was too happy to care.

Nevertheless, some plan of campaign was necessary. The only exercise I had taken for months had been with Indian clubs and chest weights. My doctor had told me I was in serious need of some kind of muscular stimu-





"You want me to train you up so you can lick some guy?" he asked, looking me over with professionally critical eye.

lation, and so, being a conscientious and methodical person, I devote fifteen minutes twice a day to this routine.

The plan that I evolved brought me to the "studio" of "Spike" Sullivan. The studio is situated over a barroom, in which I subsequently located Spike, a retired pugilist who had turned boxing instructor. This much will I say for Spike—with him appearance did not lie. A countenance that could never have been prepossessing bore marks of his ring activities in the form of a badly bashed nose and curiously remodeled ears.

No man in his right senses would have chosen Spike as an aid-de-camp to Cupid. I should have excused my-

self at once and gone elsewhere in search of assistance, but I was not in my right senses. I was in love with Molly. I saw not the plug-ugly before me, but Molly—Molly with her red-tinged hair rippling about her small, graceful head in the close, soft waves that so charmingly revealed its fine shape.

Spike was simply the means to the end. What cared I if his brown eyes were small and mean, so long as Molly's blue eyes were large and candid?

"You want me to train you up so that you can lick some guy?" he asked, looking me over with professionally critical eye.

"Not at all," I answered. "I want

quick action. I want you to fix me up with a guy that I can lick, or, rather, who will pretend that I can lick him."

Then I unfolded my plan.

"You want somebody to pull a fake with the old gink at the ringside—that's the lay, ain't it?" asked Spike, retranslating my own attempt at lucidity to an argot more subtle and better fitted to his comprehension.

I admitted that this was the truth of the matter.

"Wot's in it for me?" he asked, rubbing his bashed nose with a meditative forefinger.

"Ten dollars."

Spike gave a fairly good imitation of a man whose professional merits have been grievously underrated.

"Wot? Ten dollars? Nuttin' doin'! Fifty, or it's all off, see?"

It was here that I miscued. But I reasoned that fifty dollars for the slight services Spike would be called upon to render was a ridiculous sum. Eventually we compromised on twenty-five. There was a baleful light in Spike's eye, but I thought I had him. The twenty-five was not to be paid until he "delivered the goods."

Spike insisted upon a rehearsal.

"Y' slip it to me like this, and I take the count—see."

Spike had the soul of an artist, after all. He wanted it all very realistic.

"Now try it again."

My plan was very simple. The colonel walked to the village every night to get his mail, a proceeding he referred to as his "constitutional" and followed with the regularity of one who observes a religious rite. I planned to meet him, as if by accident, in the village, that very night and fasten myself to him. At the entrance to his driveway, Spike was to appear and belligerently demand money. I, affecting displeasure at his manner, would straightway curtly refuse. After which, he

was to become insulting, and I was to thrash him.

It all struck me as silly and melodramatic and probably ineffectual as well, but Molly professed great admiration for the outline I gave her.

"It will be like being in a play," she said.

The colonel usually started for the village shortly after seven. I decided that I would let him get by and then follow at a fair distance. I sauntered down the driveway and took my station where a clump of bushes, just inside my gate, concealed me from the eyes of any one passing down the road. As I waited, I reflected on the absurdity of my position.

The colonel appeared very shortly, striding along as if congratulating the fine evening on the existence of such a fine figure of a man as himself to enjoy it. He had his coat tightly buttoned over his chest, which always looks as if he kept it inflated to the last cubic inch of pressure, and he savored the air as a Kentuckian of equal military rank savors "four fingers of old Kaintuck's crownin' contribution, suh, to her claim of supremacy among the States, suh."

"Well, sir," said the colonel. "What are you doing here, you old rascal?"

For a moment I thought I was discovered. But there was more amiability in the colonel's tones than he has ever greeted me with. I peeked cautiously around the corner of the bush.

The colonel was speaking to Spike. "Well, if it ain't the colonel!" said that worthy, and foreboding possessed me.

Evidently the colonel and Spike were old acquaintances.

"Walk down to the village with me," said the colonel. "I'd like to have a talk with you."

"Sorry, colonel, but I can't. I've got a little job on to-night."

"Ha, ha!" laughed the colonel.

"What are you up to now, Spike? Well—stop off on your way back. I live in the second house up the road. You can't miss the entrance—brick posts with a concrete ball and grilled gates. Only one on the road."

This was exactly the description I had given to Spike of the scene of our prearranged encounter. I shuddered. Things were fast going from bad to worse for me. Any lingering hope that they might stop short of actual disaster was cut short by a loud guffaw from Spike.

"Excuse me, colonel," he said, "but *this* is too rich!"

Whereupon, Spike proceeded to relate my plan to the colonel, down to the last detail.

"I never suspected you were the old guy he spoke of, colonel," he added, as if sensing the need of an apology. "He mentioned no names."

"Let me think this over, Spike. He's going to give you twenty-five if you help him put this over?"

"Yes," said Spike aggrievedly. "He's a cheap guy."

"He is. Why, I'd give fifty dollars to see you lick him. By Jove, I don't know but what I'd make it a hundred if the job was done good and thoroughly!"

I couldn't see the colonel's face, but I could feel him wink.

"Colonel," said Spike, "I'm spending that hundred this minute."

So *this* was to be the fruit of Molly's little plan! I was to be beaten by this professional bruiser, who was to get a hundred dollars if he did the job thoroughly. And he was *spending* the hundred already. Lovely. Only there was one flaw in the colonel's amendment. He didn't know of my presence in the bushes.

Eavesdroppers may hear no good of themselves, but they get a lot of useful information sometimes. I had.

The colonel and Spike might be pres-

ent at the little drama at the grilled gate, but I would not. As far as I was concerned, it would be "Hamlet" with *Hamlet* left out.

I retreated to my study. There Molly, silver-framed, gazed at me, scornful-eyed. I groaned. I might save my face in the physical sense, but there was no question but what figuratively I was to lose it. The colonel, as Spike might say, was "dead wise." I groaned again. Why had I not remembered the colonel's famous collection of sporting prints and the possibility of his acquaintance with members of Spike's tribe? I should have hired a hobo.

One thing I was certain of—no power on earth would compel me to be among those present at the colonel's grilled gate *that* evening.

"Saw your light, Benton. I knew that Molly expected you, and I thought I'd drop in and walk over with you."

The voice was one I knew too well. It bespoke a man with a ruddy countenance and white whiskers. I had made a fatal mistake in fleeing no farther than my study. The colonel had run me down. He stood in the doorway, outwardly cordial—oppressively so—but there was a peculiar glitter in his eye.

"I'm sorry. Can't get over to-night, colonel."

"Why not?"

"I don't feel very well," I answered in all truth.

"Nonsense! A little exercise will do you good. It's close in here. Get your hat and cane."

It may have been imagination, but it seemed to me that the colonel emphasized the word exercise.

"I'm—I'm busy."

"You look *busy*."

The fury of the worm about to turn possessed me. The colonel was evidently determined that I should go with him. He was determined to make me

show up or show down. I wouldn't— And then all my hesitancy fled. I had an idea. I almost laughed out loud.

"Very well, colonel," I said with enforced geniality. "As long as you insist, I'll come. I had an idea, though, that I was—well, *persona non grata* with you."

The colonel had the grace to look nonplused. But he recovered himself.

"Well, Benton, I'll tell you, since you've raised the question, that for my part I like a different kind of a man—a two-fisted, hard-hitting sort of a chap.

Perhaps you know what I mean. I think Molly is making a mistake, and I trust she will find it out. But, after all, we are neighbors."

He trusted Molly would find it out, did he? Find it out at the grilled gate, after I had been beaten without mercy! Perhaps so, perhaps not. My plan was simple. But in the meantime, I could not resist the temptation to give the colonel an anxious moment. I reached in the drawer of the library table and took out a small automatic revolver.

The colonel's eyes watched me as I dropped it in my coat pocket, but I pretended not to notice.

"My dear Benton," he exploded, "you don't mean to say that you are going to carry that thing with you during an evening stroll?"

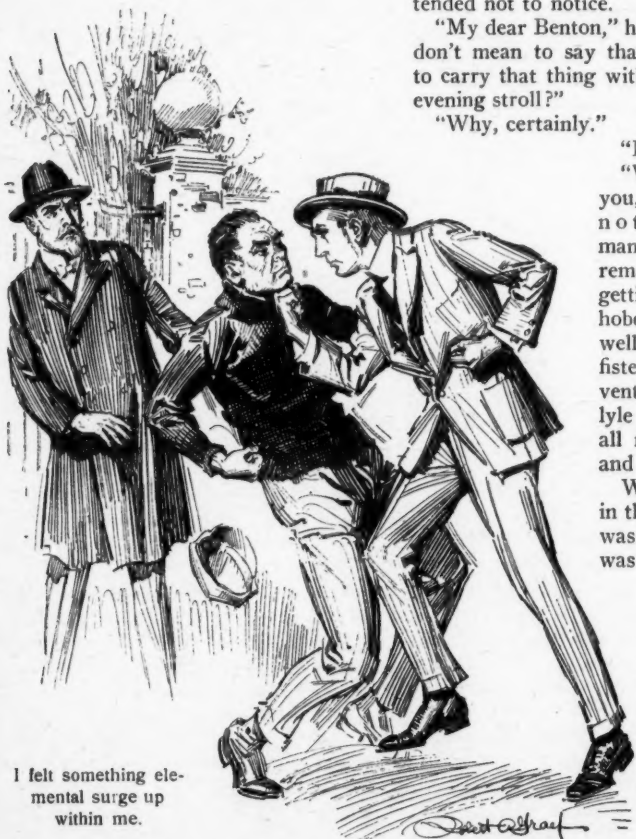
"Why, certainly."

"But what for?"

"Well, I'll tell you, colonel. I'm not a two-fisted man, as you have remarked. This is getting to be the hobo season and—well, not being two-fisted, I carry the invention that, as Carlyle puts it, 'makes all men equally tall and strong.'"

What was passing in the colonel's mind was clear to me. He was seeing his grilled gate all spattered with blood, with the writhing Spike musing up the roadway. The colonel was painfully at a loss.

"Still, if you insist—" I



I felt something elemental surge up within me.

said, and tossed the automatic back into the drawer, letting the action finish off my remark.

The colonel's sigh of relief was explosive. The vision he had had of reporters tramping all over the front lawn, while camera men pursued him and Molly, faded, and he regained his customary aplomb.

On the way over, he chuckled once or twice to himself, but I pretended not to notice. He was thinking of the surprise that awaited me, and I was thinking of the surprise that awaited him.

I realize that plain statement of my attitude does not put me in a heroic light, if you view the matter from the colonel's angle. I myself never could see it his way. I am not a professional pugilist and never hoped to be. Such talents as I have lie in a different direction. I had lived for almost thirty years without being engaged in a fight, street or otherwise. As I say, such exercise as I take is planned for certain ends, and among these the art of self-defense, so called, is not numbered.

My plan was simply this. When Spike asked me for money, he'd get it—get it quick. I'd give him a dollar—which I had placed in my vest pocket, where it would be instantly available—and then, turning to the colonel, explain to him that my heart was *always* touched in such cases.

Of one thing I was sure—I'd either get away clear, while Spike's none-too-nimble brain endeavored to digest the meaning of this change in plans, or else he'd strike me when I wasn't looking, which wouldn't count. I was determined that, no matter when or where he struck me, I wouldn't be looking. So much for Spike and the colonel. I still had an ace in the hole.

In the aftermath, whatever direction that might take, I had as much on the colonel as he had on me. As for Molly—well, I'd have to extend myself to placate her and I was prepared.

Spike was lounging toward the gate as we approached it. I reached for the dollar, to be sure it was in readiness.

*It was gone.* A bachelor's pockets are not the safest receptacles for money.

A wild impulse toward flight seized me. Yet my brain seemed to have absolutely no control over my legs. I moved on toward the redoubtable Spike as a bird hops, willy-nilly, toward the snake that is about to devour it. Perhaps a suspicion that Molly was hidden somewhere in the neighborhood, waiting to witness the little drama, may have had something to do with my amazing progress toward annihilation.

Spike looked at the colonel, and there was an all but imperceptible flicker of his left eyelid as he did so. Then he turned to me.

"Give me——" he began.

He got it. I swear I do not know how it happened. I saw the bashed nose and the ferretlike eyes through a red mist. And then my fist shot up quite automatically. It snapped Spike's head back. I felt something elemental surge up within me. And as Spike's head came back to its normal position, I saw, still through a red mist, a snarling mouth and eyes like slits. I cared not a whit. I let him have the other fist—slipped it to him just as we had rehearsed it in the studio. The impact broke two knuckles, and for one wild minute I thought I had killed Spike. I had never seen a man knocked out before.

There was Spike stretched out as tidy as you please on the road, while I, who deplore such things as a matter of principle, stood glorying in what I had accomplished.

I looked at the colonel. His mouth had sagged open, and he was staring as if his brain refused to believe what his eyes reported and had sent them back to look again.

"Triple cross, colonel," I said. "Spike



and I started to double cross you, and then you and he started to double cross me. But I heard every word you said to-night down the road."

"Jove!" he said musingly, unable to detach his thoughts from the prostrate Spike. "A clean knock-out! Where did you get the wallop?"

I told him that he could search me, and he promptly accepted this as an invitation to feel my muscle.

"Splendid!" he ejaculated. "Splendid!"

And then I had to explain about my daily routine with the chest weights and Indian clubs.

"No wonder!" he ejaculated. "Best exercise in the world! Go through my own course of sprouts every morning. I'd like to see you work out, my boy. Might get a few pointers."

I ruefully considered my knuckles.

"Run up to the house, Hal, my boy, and let Molly bathe 'em," said the colonel heartily. "I'll look after our friend, here."

I strode up the pathway like a conqueror. The colonel had called me "Hal." Bully old boy he was, in spite of his idiosyncrasies. Couldn't help liking him myself, now that I really knew him. As for his predilection for two-fisted, hard-hitting chaps, it was not so hard to understand, after all. I rather approved of that kind of a chap myself.

I met Jackson, the gardener, halfway to the house. I had overheard Jackson—taking his cue from the colonel, I suspect—informing the housemaid one day that that "pianner-playin' chap" wanted

to see Miss Molly. I stood in the middle of the path now, blocking his way.

"Jackson," I demanded, "where's Miss Molly?"

I wanted to see if he would notice any change in me. He did.

"I'm sure I haven't seen 'er, sor," he said hurriedly, as if he expected he might be accused of mislaying her.

"Very well," I answered and moved on in a way designed to impress Jackson with the narrowness of his escape. And I'm not so sure but what his escape *was* narrow. I felt quite unaccountably pugnacious.

Molly was on the porch.

"You see," she said, "it *was* a perfectly good plan."

Evidently it was. The only drawback is the colonel's new attitude toward me. It's too effusive. Every time I go over to see Molly, he fastens to me like an Old Man of the Sea and proceeds to relate the details of some ring battle he witnessed when he was a young man. He insists upon regarding me as having hidden my light under a bushel.

"It reminds me——" the colonel will begin at this point, and Molly and I exchange despairing glances. But after a while the colonel's voice becomes even louder and more impressive. It seems as if he were shouting to keep himself awake.

"As I—was—saying—— As—I—was—saying——"

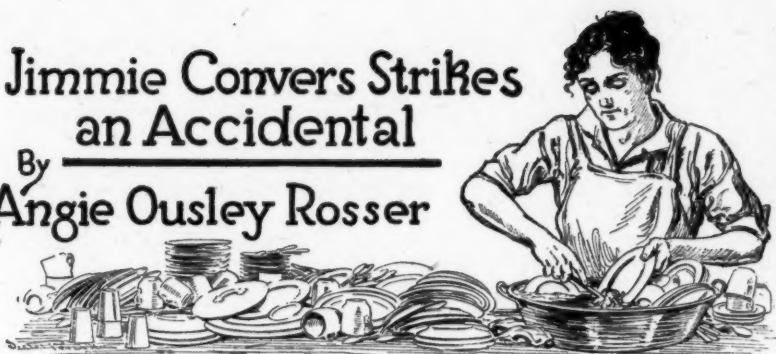
And then the inevitable happens—the colonel falls asleep.

And then *again* the inevitable happens.



# Jimmie Convers Strikes an Accidental

By  
Angie Ousley Rosser



ILLUSTRATED BY VICTOR PERARD

The enterprising piano agent works an unexpected bit of magic in the Slawson household, and witnesses a modern miracle—the rebuilding of an illusion that had been destroyed.

THE Hoke Slawson Ranch is less than fifteen miles from Harpersville, and Harpersville lies on the San Antonio & Aransas Pass Railroad—familiarily known to its patrons as “the Sap”—only some four hours’ run from San Antonio.

To the average Texan, to whom a journey across a few hundreds of the limitless miles that span his State is a pleasant trifle, this distance between the Hoke Slawson Ranch and the city would have been no great matter. But to Hoke Slawson, ranchman, anything involving an expenditure, outside of the legitimate ones that had satisfied his own rightful needs and desires, had been indeed a great matter. So none of Hoke Slawson’s family were travelers. No one knew how much land Hoke Slawson owned, certainly not his wife, though there were those who shrewdly surmised that it spread over three counties. No one knew the extent of his fortune, least of all his wife, but it was rumored in San Antonio that old “King” Hoke’s acquired dollars would buy the Maverick block a time or two, with enough left over to pur-

chase all the grisly ornaments of the Buckhorn Saloon.

It had been Slawson’s boast that his fortune had been founded upon countless economies. And it had been. Mrs. Slawson, a gaunt slattern of a woman, with pale-blue eyes and a persistently sallow skin, knew best about the Slawson economies, for it was through her that they had been effected. Since the day when she had entered the long, low, unpainted ranch house, a shy and awkward bride, until the day of Hoke’s sudden death, economy had been her daily companion and her night’s grim bed-fellow. Hoke Slawson died of apoplexy, and his wife, unenlightened as to the probable cause of the malady, looked upon his demise as a blow from Providence and wondered how she was going to manage alone.

At first it had been necessary, that soul-shaving business of rendering expenditure nil, for Slawson had been young and his original acres had been anything but boundless. She had been eager to see her husband “get on,” and she had assumed her share of the burdens gladly. That the burdens had in-

creased as the necessity for them had lessened she had not been aware, but they had bent her bright erectness into the stoop of premature middle age. She had grown used to hard work, to knotted fingers, dowdy garments, and the hopeless ill health of the woman who toils ceaselessly and a trifle harder than her strength should allow. Her husband's occasional promises of future luxuries—a girl to help with the dishwashing and water piped into the kitchen—had been incentive enough to keep her passively content, for she was not imaginative. Women who work endlessly from sunrise at the unrelieved monotony of manual labor seldom are imaginative.

She had but one child, a daughter, and she was often vaguely thankful that her maternal duties were no heavier. There was enough to do, looking after the chickens and the pigs and cooking for a great crew of cowboys and hired hands and washing greasy mountains of dishes daily.

Mrs. Slawson did not know, as the years went by, that when she looked across undulating prairies to the splendid yellow of the sunset fireworks, or when she wearily stared out at the riotous glow of a cloudy sunrise in winter, she was not once able to perceive the boundaries of Hoke Slawson's gradually acquired estate. Nor did she know that his herds were the largest in the countryside. But, dimly aware that Hoke was "beginnin' t' get on," the one ambition of her life began to take shape. Since the momentous occasion when she and Hoke had discovered their little daughter, Vinie, laboriously pushing out the strains of "Home, Sweet Home" from the rheumatic little parlor organ, she had longed to hear the child play that melody—with variations—on the shiny keys of a real piano. The girl was fourteen now, and the husband's promises about the instrument had been evasively vague.

So it was that, while San Antonio knew Hoke Slawson—and the St. Anthony chef was particular about the quality of Roquefort that went into his favorite salad dressing—the city was to Mrs. Slawson still a city of dreams. She had been there once—a gala year, that had been—soon after she had been married. Hoke had taken her—at excursion rates—to the Battle of Flowers, and when Mrs. Slawson had fed her imagination after that, it had been upon the material gathered in those few days. It had been before the plaza had been made respectable and sanitary, and when Hoke had taken her down at night to watch the colorful activities of the place, Mrs. Slawson had seen dark-eyed venders of tamales and chile con carne, and had felt that she was viewing romance at firsthand. In the magnificence of the Bexar lobby, she had basked timidly and had heard, with awe, a phonograph—the first in San Antonio.

Hoke Slawson's wife had traveled no more. Indeed, until the sudden death of her husband, when she followed the hearse into Harpersville, she had ventured no farther from home than the little crossroads store a couple of miles from the ranch house. And, despite her sodden and unlovely grief, she found herself observing the town with increasing interest. After the services at the prim and dreary cemetery, she went with Vinie for a little tour of the streets of Harpersville.

Vinie had many questions to ask, chiefly about the funeral.

"The crowd was awful big," she volunteered. "Did you know pa had so many friends?"

"It was a real nice buryin', wasn't it?" her mother returned, with an unusual show of animation. "I didn't just rightly know what t' do about th' fixin's an' thin's, but th' gentleman from Santone, the one that said he was your

pa's lawyer, why, he just took thin's in hand an' tended t' the casket an' all."

"It was grand!" breathed Vinie, with the enthusiasm of budding fourteen. "Just grand, ma! All silver trimmin' an' covered with roses! I didn't think those roses could be real until I smelled 'em."

"I told that gentleman," Mrs. Slawson worried gently, "I didn't know just what your pa had laid up against his funeral, but I didn't want anythin' about the funeral should look meechin'. He said f'r me not to worry, but t' come t' the hotel this aft'noon an' he'd tell me all about how your pa stood financial. I can't somehow understand why he didn't tell me those thin's himself, instead of hirin' some kind of a lawyer t' do it for him."

The widow's expression was thoughtful when she expressed this vague doubt to her daughter, but when her interview with Roscoe Conrike, the San Antonio attorney, was closed, the lines of her face were molded into a look of awe. The lawyer smiled oddly as he watched her leave the hotel. So that repressed little woman with the stringy hair was "King" Slawson's wife! And she had not known that she was a wealthy woman, would not believe it, in fact, until he had laid before her convincing documents of the gilt-edged variety. Conrike remembered festive occasions when, to celebrate the unloading of large shipments of cattle, Hoke Slawson had offered the best wines and foods on the market to his business friends, and he was moved to contrast his memory of the brilliantly garbed ladies; of great dazzle and no particular reputation, who had been wont to grace the board at these large-handed and festive affairs with this tired-looking slattern who bore the name of the departed cattle king. Well, the lawyer shrugged away his thoughts, there would be no more celebrations for Slawson now, and perhaps it was not

too late for the little woman to enjoy the fortune that she inherited unreservedly.

Mrs. Slawson and Vinie drove home again in the mediæval vehicle that had borne them to the funeral. Mrs. Slawson still had the same look of awe that had amused the lawyer. She was saying something over and over to herself, as if she would be convinced. Finally she said it aloud, to Vinie, her mind just beginning crazily to grasp some of the possibilities of her new fortune:

"We're rich! We're rich! We're awful, awful rich!"

Having to explain matters to Vinie helped her to gain her own mental poise, but her mind kept working with those mountains of silver dollars which her newly stimulated imagination vividly pictured for her. They would have water piped into the kitchen, they would have "bought" soap now—she meant to throw away the old lye kettle as soon as she reached home!—and they could get a girl to come in Saturdays and help with the cleaning. Some day she could take Vinie to Santone—Why, she could send Vinie to school in Santone—if she wished. She could—

"Ma"—Vinie took up the thought from her mother's unspoken daydream—"do you suppose we—we can have a *piano*?"

She breathed the words reverently, and Mrs. Slawson replied in the same tone:

"We'll send f'r a catalogue t'-morra, honey."

The little girl became lost in the contemplation of this delightful possibility, and the woman returned to her own thoughts. But now an ugly notion obtruded, as convincing as it was unexpected. At the mention of the piano, she remembered how long Hoke had been promising them that boon. And swiftly, too, she realized that he could have afforded that luxury twice over, long before his death. He could have

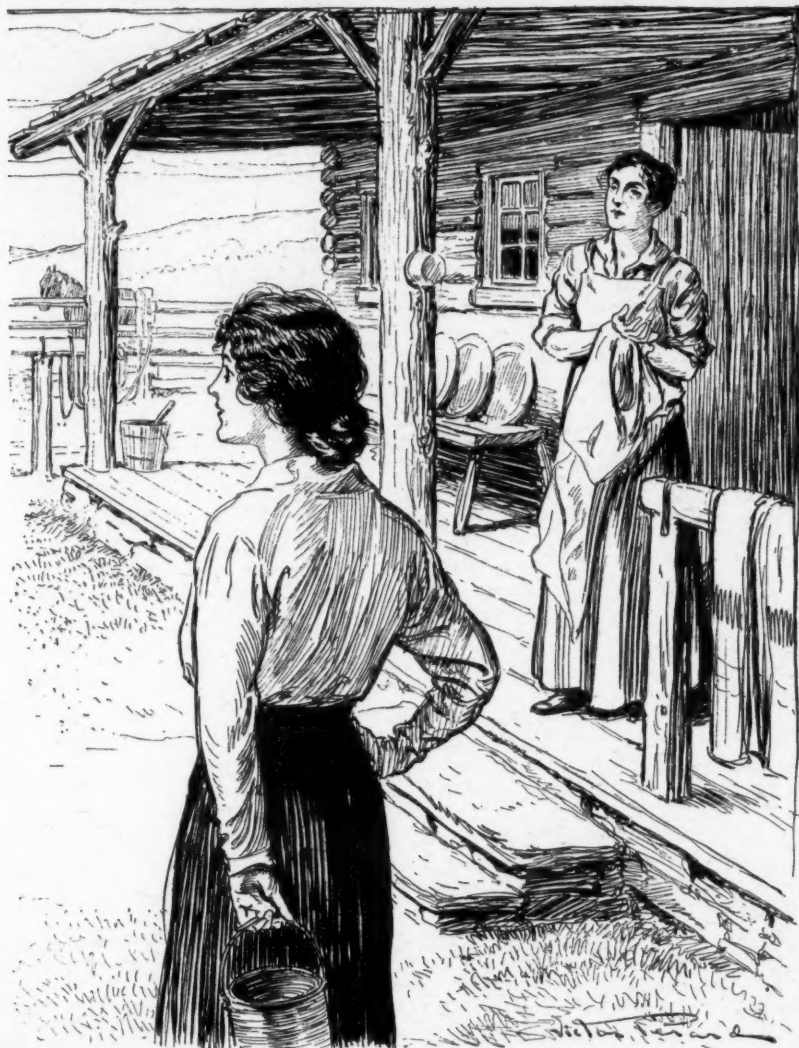


The next morning a stranger drove up to the ranch house, a dapper, youthful, and  
wood Convers, of the Havermayer

afforded a servant for her, he could  
have afforded to paper the house for  
her, to put in lights, to build her a

garden fence—in short, Hoke Slawson  
could have given her all that she de-  
sired.





attractive stranger. "I am Mr. Convers," he explained politely, "Mr. James Edge-Piano Company, San Antonio."

She had drudged uncomplainingly all her life, but now, in the light of the lawyer's revelations, she reviewed those pa-

tient, dreary years, and hated her husband's memory. Resentment came late, but it acted like the swift, searing heat

of a strong acid. Hot, unaccustomed tears moistened her eyes, and she turned away angrily that Vinie might not see. It was not all hatred that brought the bitter lump to her throat; it was the sudden hurt of disillusionment, the crushing humiliation that comes to a woman—be she twenty or seventy, an Eve or a Patient Griselda—who learns that she has been *used* by a man. She had, in her way, loved Hoke Slawson through all the hard years.

It was a new and grim Mrs. Slawson who came back home. She was unhappy and she was defiant—and she had no memories that she could cherish.

The next morning a stranger drove up to the ranch house, a dapper, youthful, and attractive stranger.

"I am Mr. Convers," he explained politely, when Mrs. Slawson met him at the all-but-unused front door, "Mr. James Edgewood Convers, of the Havermayer Piano Company, San Antonio."

He handed her his card with a flourish that was not lost upon the palpitant Vinie, hovering near to watch and listen. Strangers at the ranch were most uncommon.

Mrs. Slawson questioned Mr. James Edgewood Convers with her eyes. The easy give and take of social intercourse, even intercourse with agents and peddlers, was to her a sealed book.

"May I see Mr. Slawson?" the young man inquired easily. "Mr. Hoke Slawson?"

Mrs. Slawson felt her throat contract.

"He's dead," she responded—bluntly, for she could think of no other way to convey the truth.

"Dead!"

The surprise and consternation in the voice of Mr. Convers were convincing. He may or he may not have been practicing upon that vocal effect.

"He was took sudden," Mrs. Slaw-

son volunteered, with a gentler accent. "We buried him yesterday."

"Then"—the young man's manner was a bit hesitant and bewildered—"could I see Mrs. Slawson, his wife?"

"I'm her."

Mrs. Slawson opened the door to admit the stranger. She had omitted to do so before, simply because it had not occurred to her.

"I am truly, truly distressed," Mr. Convers murmured earnestly, pressing Mrs. Slawson's hand before he took the seat she offered in the musty little living room with its rag carpet, marble-topped center table, and tiny parlor organ. Mr. Convers noted the organ furtively. "I had no idea," he continued, "no idea at all that Mr. Slawson was not in his usual good health. It is a shock indeed, Mrs. Slawson. Why, the piano is at the station now. Just to think that Mr. Slawson himself told me—"

"The piano?" echoed Mrs. Slawson stupidly.

"The piano?" squealed Vinie, with something of the prophetic vision of youth. "Oh, is there a piano?"

"But didn't you know?" Mr. Convers was obviously bewildered. "Hadden't he told you? Ah! I suppose it was to have been a surprise for you!"

"Surprise?" The widow seemed not only surprised, but a trifle dismayed.

"Perhaps," the agent volunteered modestly, "I'd best begin at the beginning. Two weeks ago Mr. Slawson was in San Antonio."

Here Mrs. Slawson and Vinie nodded. They remembered that trip—business, of course.

"He came to our place," the young man continued, "and ordered a piano, a very fine piano."

Mother and daughter exchanged glances and waited breathlessly.

"At the time," continued the young emissary of light, "we did not have in



She placed the bills in her archaic old purse with an air that impressed the local money magnate.

stock the instrument that was, in the estimation of your husband, the very best piano on the market. So Mr. Slawson had us order one from our wholesale house.

"The best," he said, "the best is none too good for my family, so send it down to the ranch and—and hang the expense!" Those, Mrs. Slawson, were his very words."

Mr. Convers waited an impressive moment before he continued the recital:

"We heard no **more** from him, but

we had the piano shipped, and I, according to his orders, came down with the instrument to see that it was delivered in perfect condition. Of course," he concluded apologetically, "I wouldn't have come had I known of his sad death, and I will, of course, see to the shipping of the instrument back to the house. It's a very fine baby grand Chippewa, and I'm sorry to lose the sale—a matter of nine hundred and fifty dollars—but of course I understand."

Expecting results, no doubt, from his

excellent portrayal of a young man in grave doubt and misapprehension, Mr. James Edgewood Convers was nevertheless unprepared for the transformation that he saw in Mrs. Slawson's face. There came to her then something of the beauty that may have been hers in her long-ago girlhood when she had first learned that Hoke Slawson aspired to be her "steady." An evanescent something in her eyes, a fugitive glory in her smile, a delicate ghost of rose color in her cheeks, these all spoke to the young agent of an emotion that he could not account for. He could not know that he was witnessing a modern miracle—the rebuilding of an illusion that had been destroyed; he only knew that gaunt, tired Mrs. Slawson beamed on him.

"We'll keep the piano," she assured him. "We'll keep it gladly. It'll be like havin' Mr. Slawson with us again, just t' know he was that thoughtful f'r us."

Mrs. Slawson smiled, and Vinie jumped up and down in a delight that could not fail to remind the spectator of a small puppy wagging itself all over.

Mrs. Slawson drove to town with Mr. Convers in order to see her bank about the payment. A subtle sense of power had come to her with the mere knowledge of the possession of property, and she interviewed the president of the Harpersville National Bank with no outward, and very little inward, trepidation. She readily obtained a thousand dollars, against the probation of the Slawson will, and she placed the bills in her archaic old purse with an air that impressed the local money magnate.

At the station, she told Mr. James Edgewood Convers good-by with an affection that was frankly reciprocated by the young man, who had led her to augment the piano commission with a generous order for sheet music, and had advised her concerning music teachers in San Antonio, city of her dreams.

"Young man," she told him, "you

was a sorta unconscious agent of Providence, an' I feel like I got t' tell you what that piano means t' me. It isn't s' much the piano—it's the lovin' thought back of it that took all the discords out of my life. T' think that Hoke was thinkin' of us at the last! I'll always remember you, because it was you that brought us that message of harmony."

Once on the dusty train and headed for home, Jimmie Convers dug into his vest pocket for the clipping that had really inspired his visit to Harpersville. It was a brief notice of the death of Hoke Slawson, the cattle king, with two bits of information appended that had proved useful to Jimmie, since his acquaintance with the dead man had begun and ended with the clipping. It stated that he left a wife and daughter and that his fortune was considerable. Jimmie had argued at the time of reading that any wife and daughter who had inherited a fortune would be glad to pay for a piano, provided they thought it had been ordered by the head of the household. It wasn't a new game, but it had not often been known to fail.

Jimmie was proud of his coup, but aside from the wizardry of selling an expensive piano at more than list price in war time, he felt vaguely some of the more intimate magic that he had wrought in the Slawson household.

"I had it figured," he told himself, as he leaned back on the hot plush, "that I was goin' to be a pretty smooth little Wallingford, but I'm blamed if I knew I was goin' to get a chance to play the rôle of musical philanthropist or tuner up of any old dame's inside harmonics. I guess the old rapsallion wasn't any too lavish with his family, and this sort of put the kibosh on their dislikin' his memory. I laid out to play the whole thing in b natural and bring up my sales record or bust, but I hit an accidental out there, and I'm darned if it didn't sound like a regular symphony concert! And it listened pretty good!"

# Just Manners

By Annie Steger Winston

ILLUSTRATED BY LAURA E. FOSTER

Intimate, delicate charm runs through this very real character sketch of the adolescent country girl who unconsciously reveals her whole heart in her talks with the city woman.

WHO was that amazingly pretty girl I saw at the station?"

was one of Agatha Adams' first questions of the "natives," as inwardly she denominated the good people of Gilpin, the little backwoods mountain town to which, out of a whim already half repented, she had come to spend the summer. But when one has been everywhere, what is one to do? And the scenery really was all that was said of it, quite justifying a pretense, at least, of painting it, small as her delusion was in regard to her own skill.

At the question, Mrs. Blake, in whose comfortable little drab-painted frame house she had been received as a boarder, lost for the moment her characteristic geniality.

"She knows who she is, well enough!" she said scathingly. Mrs. Blake's physical mold was heroic, her voice imposingly deep. She was not often severe, but severe, when she was severe, with effect really formidable. "There never was a more stuck-up piece, along of being Lawyer Parsley's daughter and living in the only brick house in town. Let alone the way the young men are crazy about her. And she looking down on every last one of 'em—Ed Fitchett and all! What they see so much in her passes me. What I say is, beauty's mighty pretty—but it ain't everything!"

Beauty, in the case of Miss Parsley, was undoubtedly "mighty pretty."

A few days after Agatha's establish-

ment at Mrs. Blake's, there was brought her, in the corner of the cook's gingham apron, a card bearing the name of Miss Kalmia Parsley.

"I guess you think it's awfully curious, my calling on you," she said, "but I just fell in love with you the minute I laid my eyes on you—though some people do think I haven't got any heart!" She threw it out consciously and dimpled a little. "I hope you won't think I'm gushing, because it isn't that at all, but the instant I saw you, I said to myself: 'Now that's just exactly what I'd love to be like!' Only what's the use of even wishing a thing like that when you live in a place like Gilpin? You think it's just awful, I know."

Politely Agatha protested.

"It's awfully nice of you to try to make the best of it," Kalmia rejoined, "but it is awful—to anybody that is used to anything. I know by myself, even. I've been off to boarding school—in Josphithville. Of course you wouldn't think Josphithville was anything much, either; but the people there are simply crazy about culture, owing to the Finnegan. It was to Mrs. Finnegan's seminary that I went. Josphithville was named after Mrs. Finnegan's step-uncle-in-law, who was in the legislature, or something, and awful distinguished.

"She's awful cultivated and exclusive, and so are her daughters. They had a whole bookcase of etiquette books that they trained us out of—in



table manners and things like that. They always had finger bowls for dessert, even if there wasn't anything but gingersnaps and apples; and anybody that let their finger touch the blade of their knife when they were cutting anything, or put their fork too far in, or opened their mouth too wide to chew, got a demerit and no butter.

"Once a week, she and her daughters sat in the parlor, and we had to come with cards and call—of course she gave them back to us afterward—and we had to talk real society about the weather and things, with all our a's broad. Only some of the girls would giggle and turn it all into a joke, in spite of all the Finnegans could do. I saw the importance myself, and I got so I could talk broad real well. Only I've nearly forgotten how now. It didn't seem to be any use keeping it up here! *You* talk broad, don't you?"

"I—suppose so," Agatha said. "I never thought of it, one way or another."

"Because you were *born* talking broad!" breathed Kalmia fervently.

The girl was wonderfully pretty, albeit her whole appearance was a rather pathetically faithful rendition of some superstitiously revered fashion plate. As far as was humanly possible, she had made a lay figure of herself. But the grace of her slender form was not wholly to be obliterated. Under the brim of her preposterously "stylish" hat looked out the sweetest and bluest of eyes. The delicately fluted pink cups of her name flower, gay now upon the mountainsides, were scarcely more flowerlike than she. If one might only try one's 'prentice hand upon those lines, those tints! The temptation was not to be resisted.

"I wonder if you'd let me paint your picture?" Agatha said.

"Oh, would you?" the girl exclaimed. "And you are an artist?"

"I don't even imagine I am one,"

Agatha told her. "But I can paint—a little. I can do a good many things—a little."

"How perfectly lovely!" Kalmia said. "At Mrs. Finnegan's, they taught accomplishments. I wish now I'd learned to hand paint instead of taking wax work. But Miss Florinda taught wax work and Miss Dorinda taught hand painting, and I liked Miss Florinda better than I did Miss Dorinda—though that wasn't any reason, of course. I'll be perfectly crazy about having you paint me—if only for the chance it will give me of seeing you. Just let me know when you want me to come."

A sitting was arranged for the next day.

"And now I must go!" Kalmia said, rising. "I guess you've been thinking I was going to stay forever, which is dreadfully unceremonious, I know, for a first visit, but I just simply couldn't tear myself away. I'll be looking forward every minute to to-morrow!"

Her card lay on the table. She picked it up.

"Please excuse the way this is printed. I was perfectly furious when they came home from the *Gazette* office. But it's the first time, I guess, they ever printed a visiting card, and I doubt whether they ever saw one. You know this is the jumping-off place, if there ever was one! Good-by till to-morrow—if you don't change your mind! I'm awfully afraid you will, if you listen to Mrs. Blake about me! She thinks I'm the most heartless being that ever was born, all because there was a young man boarding here that I couldn't think the pink of perfection like she did. Not that I didn't like him well enough, in a way. But she was simply crazy and distracted about him, and expected me to be, and hasn't got any earthly use for me because I wasn't. Good-by again! Don't let Mrs. Blake make you think I'm perfectly awful!"

Mrs. Blake unquestionably enter-

tained sufficient prejudice against Miss Parsley to look with small favor upon the project of painting her.

"She's peacock enough now!" she opined. "What I say is, 'Pretty is as pretty does'—and the way she did Ed Fitchett is enough for me!"

Mrs. Blake's tone always seemed so implicitly to assume a dateless familiarity upon the part of her hearer with any name that she chanced to mention that it was difficult to resist a light-headed impression of previous acquaintance—perhaps in some former state of existence. But no.

"Who is Ed Fitchett?" inquired Agatha.

"A mighty nice young man," said Mrs. Blake, "if he was mountain! I reckon I ought to know, because he was my own blessed boarder all the time he was here in the lumber business; which he would be now, but for Kalmia Parsley. I don't care who knows it—I never have had one grain of use for her after the way she did him!"

"What did she do to him?"

Mrs. Blake gave an emphatic rock to the large green chair in which she was enjoying the afternoon breezes upon her gourd-draped front porch, in company with Agatha, similarly seated.



"I guess you think it's awfully curious my calling on you," she said, "but I just fell in love with you the minute I laid my eyes on you."

"She shilly-shallied him out of his mind—all but. That's what. Now 'twas 'yes,' and now 'twas 'no,' till he didn't rightly know whether he was on his head or his heels. Night after night I would hear him right over my head, going backward and forward, backward and forward, for all the world like a circus animal in a cage. All at once he upped and went away."

Despite her nearly thirty years, a certain childlike love of a story lingered with Agatha.

"And never was heard of again?"

"Oh, yes." The temptation to make a good story was no temptation to Mrs. Blake. "He's been heard from. Sometimes I get a picture postal card from him myself. He's doing real well—railroading."

The sittings were held in Agatha's own room, to which her own dainty belongings now gave the keynote. The girl looked about her as a neophyte might on a shrine.

"I certainly do like things, refined!" she said. "Some people don't think it makes any difference. But it does—doesn't it?"

Agatha considered. Just how to get that pearly white, that sea-shell pink, those pure, warm shadows—

"Oh, I don't know!" she said, half absently, and reached for her rose madder.

"Oh, Miss Agatha—I can't help calling you that to save my life, though I know it's awful bad form—you do know! Not, of course, that I'm contradicting! You just don't know what it is to have things in any way but refined! People here don't attach a bit of importance to things—not the slightest bit in the world. They think I'm foolish and stuck up because I do attach importance to things. Don't you think people ought to attach importance to things, Miss Agatha?"

"Some things," Agatha conceded.

"Oh, of course they don't think people ought to do what's wrong, or live like pigs, like the poor white trash up there on the mountains do. And nobody thinks more of their own people than I do of mine, because—if I say it that shouldn't—popper certainly is the most prominent man around here, and mommer's father was a judge. But—but—*don't* you think it's the little things of life that really count?"

Agatha mixed paint and studied her subject's cheek and chin.

"Yes," she said, "with little people."

Kalmia stared.

"Maybe I'm little, then."

She slightly tossed her lovely head, which tossed as easily as a long-stemmed rose. But her azure eyes remained humble, not to say imploring.

"Anyhow, people to marry ought to be congenial. And there's simply nobody here! Not that I care anything in the world about getting married. I just wish people would let me alone about it. They seem to think it's my fault if people take ridiculous fancies to me, and do ridiculous things about it, like going away from here without any earthly rhyme or reason."

"Turn a little more to the right," directed Agatha.

"I *did* have a gentleman friend," Kalmia continued casually, "that lived in this very house. I guess you may remember hearing me mention him. Now take him. Some people might think he would be a good match. He was real getting along and handsome, and a nice, steady young man. But I do not. I don't care what anybody says—anybody but you! I've been off to boarding school"—she paused, upon the brink of tears—"and I *couldn't* marry him when he says 'b'ar' for 'bear,' and eats with his knife!"

Homely little place as Gilpin was, Agatha found herself liking it more and more. For one thing, it was quite free from the bore of "summer people." The only outsider beside herself was a certain Mr. Strange, who scarcely belongs in this story. He, obviously ill, had come on the same train with her. He was "mealing" now at Mrs. Blake's, and fast growing strong enough for excursions with Agatha among the hills.

"It seems funny that you should be satisfied here," Kalmia said, "you that have seen everything and been everywhere."

"Maybe that's the reason," said

Agatha. It would serve as well as any, if one positively must have a reason.

"I'm afraid I'm not a satisfied disposition," Kalmia confessed, her blue eyes swimming in tears. "I suppose I've got everything that a girl ought to want—a good home and parents and plenty of clothes—even if I never can feel that there's a particle of style in them—and all the attention that anybody could expect in a place like Gilpin—only there isn't a man here that doesn't bore me to death—and you so awful sweet to me, when I have a chance to see you—which isn't often now, of course. And I know I ought to be awful happy and thankful when I think of great, grown girls working out barefoot in the cornfields, and ten people, or maybe twenty, crowded in the same little one-room cabin. But all the same——"

Tragically she looked through the open window.

"It's in the Constitution that we studied at Mrs. Finnegan's that everybody has a right to pursue happiness. *You* pursue happiness, don't you, Miss Agatha?"

Agatha painted. The picture, by the way, was proving distinctly a Penelope's web. A doll-like prettiness, after all, was not the last word in Kalmia's loveliness. There was some strange, haunting quality of wistfulness that might well have been the despair of a brush more skilled than Agatha's.

"I've thought I was pursuing it," Agatha said.

"Oh, Miss Agatha, with a home in Baltimore that you don't even stay in, and winters in New York or Florida and summers in Europe—I should think you would be happy! I simply loathe little places! Some people may be able to pursue happiness in Gilpin, but I can't. Sometimes I simply long to go off and be an actress—or a trained nurse. I would just love to be a trained nurse, if I didn't hate and abhor the

smell of medicine and things and nearly faint at the sight of blood! But anyhow there isn't much use in talking about pursuing happiness when things are so that nothing can ever possibly make them any better! This is an awfully funny world, isn't it, Miss Agatha?"

With a beaming face, Mrs. Blake one day exhibited to Agatha a postal card embellished with a black and smeary likeness of Ed Fitchett, which had just come in the mail.

"There ain't any name to it," she said, "and he just says he's well and hopes I'm the same and regards to all inquiring friends—he needn't think Kalmia Parsley's one of 'em!—but it's his handwriting and I know it's him by the way his hair kind o' roaches up. Wouldn't you frame it, if you was me?"

"I should, undoubtedly," Agatha assured her.

And Miss Pet Taylor, who was "artistic," obligingly fabricated a "rustic" frame for it, out of pine cones and coffee berries. Mrs. Blake thenceforth never dusted the parlor without friendly thought for Ed Fitchett.

"I just wish he'd listen to me about Kalmia Parsley!" she would say.

Strong feeling is prone to be tropical in expression. Ed Fitchett, engaged in "railroading" upon a line whose nearest point of approach was some fifty miles from Gilpin, was not, strictly speaking, in a position to listen. Nor, as Mrs. Blake recognized, was there much likelihood of his being amenable to reason in the matter.

"All I hope is," she said, "that he'll go 'long and fall in love with somebody else, or she'll get married. I'm willing to bet one thing—and that is that she'll go through the woods and pick up a crooked stick!"

But apparently she did not know Kalmia.



"She shilly-shallied him out of his mind—all but. That's what. Now 'twas 'yes,' and now 'twas 'no,' till he didn't rightly know whether he was on his head or his heels."

"People ought to have sense about getting married, don't you think so, Miss Agatha?" she said. "And not marry until they can better themselves? I always have meant to wait until I could make a real good match—not, of course, that anybody can expect to do anything wonderful out here in the backwoods! I've always been perfectly crazy to live in the city. It makes such an awful difference in a person's looks! Do you know, Miss Agatha, you're the

first person I ever saw that I *knew* was a man-tailored?"

It happened that day that Agatha received her in the parlor. Upon the mantel was Ed Fitchett's picture, neatly ensconced in its rustic frame. Kalmia picked it up. It was a poor picture—a very poor picture. Mrs. Blake herself was not sure she would have known it, even by the roached-up hair, but for the writing upon the other side. Kalmia did know it, the moment her eyes fell upon it. But she thought it was "awful." She could not too strongly express her sense of the "awfulness" of it. The longer she looked at it—and she looked long—the more awful it appeared to her;

awful enough to make her laugh till she cried. Though, in truth, she did not laugh so very much either.

But all this was quite aside from the purpose of her visit, which was to show Agatha the diamond ring she was wearing. Mr. Smoot had given it to her. Mr. Smoot traveled, in hardware, for Cottrell & Cox, and was a stout, unimpeachably "dressy" young man, whose slight baldness, even, contributed to the jaunty neatness of his entire effect.



Kalmia was looking forward then to a visit to the Finnegans—which did not tend, needless to say, to decrease her prepossession with the subject of manners.

"It would improve anybody to be with the Finnegans," she told Agatha, upon her return. "Except you—that can't be improved!"

"Am I really so bad as all that?" caviled Agatha.

"Oh, Miss Agatha, you know what I mean! You're not a bit like the Finnegans, but, all the same, everything you do is right—like it couldn't be any other way. I don't believe you'd be a bit confused if you were dining with the Emperor of China—if it's got an emperor—and you'd know exactly what everything was for and what to do with it. You don't know how it makes me feel when I realize that there are forks and spoons and things that I wouldn't know if I saw them or have the faintest idea what to do with them. They couldn't really teach that at the Finnegans' because they didn't have the things. Of course I do know, though, that folks are a lot more stylish than spoons—and I simply beg and implore the people at home to eat ice cream with forks, but to save my life I can't get them to do it. They say it melts and runs through, and so it does, of course, sometimes, but that don't keep forks from being the correct thing and a lot better than spoons. *Aren't* forks for ice cream better, Miss Agatha?"

"Better than knives, anyway!" returned Agatha lightly.

What had she said? The girl's beautiful eyes filled. Her face grew tragic.

"Isn't it *awful* for a person to eat with his knife? I can't understand to save my life how a person that sets up for anything can eat with his knife—and say 'b'ar' for 'bear'! I don't care who does it or how many—it simply kills me, and always will!"

Kalmia was no longer wearing Mr. Smoot's ring.

"I don't mind a bald spot so much," she had told Agatha, "because it can look real stylish, sometimes. But thick thumbs are something I can't stand, even if he does keep his pants pressed and wear diamonds. What I want is culture!"

Culture, as it happened, in the shape of a pale and spectacled young college student who was supplying the vacant pulpit of the church, was just now making an unwonted visit to Gilpin.

"People say I'm a flirt and just carrying on with Mr. Nolley," she informed Agatha. "But you've got to carry on with somebody—at least I have—and there's nobody here—men, I mean. I *know* Gilpin is the flattest place on earth, and the fullest of uninteresting people!"

Poor little Kalmia! But other things were forcing her and her affairs to the background of Agatha's mind.

"Oh, Miss Agatha," Kalmia said subsequently, "I'm not asking anything, because I hope I know better, but if what I hear is true, you certainly are awfully to be congratulated; though of course it's a terrible breach of etiquette to congratulate the lady and not the gentleman. And certainly nobody on earth is more to be congratulated than he is. I don't care how rich and splendid looking he is, and awfully kind, too, in wanting to do so much for the poor people up yonder, that you certainly have been an angel to yourself! Nobody is too good for you, or good enough, and you certainly were wise to wait until you were suited. Only I guess if I waited, I'd have to wait a thousand years and then put up with what I could get or be an old maid—and nobody likes the idea of that. Do you like poetry, Miss Agatha?"

With maidenly shyness, she produced an effusion, inspired by her charms, from the pen of Mr. Nolley,

once more retired to academic shades.

"It's real good—for original poetry, isn't it?" she said. "And his sermons were real remarkable for just a student, weren't they?"

"They were remarkable for anybody," Agatha agreed, with polite ambiguity.

"And his letters are just like they came out of a book!" continued Kalmia. "Of course he wears spectacles, and his ears stick out some, and low collars aren't becoming when a person's neck is thin; but when a person's so awfully talented, I don't guess it matters.

And so educated!" Kalmia's face was sweetly awe-stricken. "He says he thinks of me in Latin!"

The two outsiders departed. When they returned—as return they would—they would be no longer two, but one.

"I told her I reckoned she'd stop bothering about the poor white trash after she was married and all," Mrs. Blake mentioned to Mr. Haskins, of the firm of Miss Haskins & Brother. "And she said she'd rather be a dog than be the moon. I don't know what that's



"Ed is bringing him to look at his cabbages," Kalmia said. "Ed is simply crazy about his cabbages."

got to do with it, but, anyhow, she said I was mighty mistaken if I thought that; they were going to have their own vine and fig tree right up among 'em, so they could watch the schoolhouse and all going on. I told her I didn't know what she wanted with a vine and a fig tree, but I certainly was glad that somebody was trying to do something for the people up there. For say what you will, they are people just as much as anybody else—moonshiners and all."

Patiently Mr. Haskins waited. The

inferior member of the firm of Miss Haskins & Brother, Hay, Grain, Mill Feed, Groceries, Dry Goods, Millinery, Wood, Coal, Confectioneries, and To-

tion agent at Excelsior. Good luck to you, Ed and Miss Kalmia!

The *Gilpin Gazette*, laid upon the Strangers' breakfast table by a smiling young mountain girl, had this item. It was not very new news—the news in the *Gilpin Gazette* seldom was—but it set Agatha to thinking.

"I must see Kalmia!" she said.

Through the windows of their cottage showed misty mountains, touched with the freshness of June. Small moving figures, like busy ants, worked along the winding highway of the creek's course. The sound of near-by saws and hammers hummed through the room.

"Have you any idea where Excelsior is?" she asked her husband.

After all, it was really on the map, and he was ready to go with her. So far, so good. Then how to get there—a more difficult matter.

But she was not easily daunted by difficulties. And so they found themselves at last arrived, after a stirring experience, which included cross-country riding in a mountain "hack," travel in a log train, and a stop-over at a country tavern. The comparative sophistication of a narrow-gauge road landed them at Excelsior.

"I hope Kalmia Parsley is satisfied!" Mrs. Blake had said, in the high tide of her indignant friendliness for Ed Fitchett; who, by the way, if the young man at the station was he, as his crutches proclaimed him to be, was a very good-looking young man indeed. Mrs. Strange, of course, had been many miles away on the occasion of Mrs. Blake's above-mentioned aspiration, but instinctively she adopted the same form of words upon her first view of Excelsior.

"I hope Kalmia is satisfied!" she said. A pig was trotting composedly down



bacco, was a man who never hurried. He tied up Mrs. Blake's parcel and handed it to her.

"You haven't heard about Ed Fitchett, have you?"

"Heard what?"

"Seems like there was a wreck on the D. & L. last night, and he got his leg crushed so bad under the engine they think they'll have to cut it off."

Mrs. Blake rolled up her eyes and clapped her hands together—reckless of her purchases.

"I hope Kalmia Parsley is satisfied!" she said devoutly.

We are glad to state that Ed Fitchett's leg, so well and favorably known in Gilpin, has progressed since removal to complete recovery. He is doing well in the capacity of sta-

what seemed to be the main thoroughfare. A large red rooster, in the immediate foreground, held up one leg superciliously and glanced disparagingly at the prospect. Here and there were small, shabby houses, with gardens given over, apparently, to sunflowers and cabbages. A broken-down cart, a few tin cans, the wreckage of a straw hat, the ghastly remains of an umbrella, and a mud puddle, diversified the scene.

"I hope Kalmia is satisfied!" she said, with hardly her usual optimism. She knew Kalmia. And this was Excelsior!

"Excelsior isn't much to look at," Kalmia herself said. Prettier than ever, if possible, she was peeling potatoes on the step of her little back porch, Agatha, upon a packing box, sociably assisting her. "But it's awfully healthy, and everybody says it's got a future. And, oh, Miss Agatha, there's no place like your own home, be it never so homely—which it is, of course. We haven't got any furniture, hardly, yet, because Ed's leg took everything. But nobody cared about that—except *him*, which was perfectly ridiculous! You really can make awfully comfortable chairs and things out of goods boxes and empty barrels—and pretty, too, stuffed and covered with cretonne. But of course we haven't had time to do very much fixing.

"'Twas the loveliest thing in you and him to send us all that perfectly beautiful silver, and Miss Pet Taylor made us a splendid landscape of Gilpin, with our house in real brick dust and little pieces of lace glued to the parlor windows—so awful cute! I'll show it to you after dinner. Everybody is crazy about the picture you painted of me, and the elegant frame! I certainly never did expect you to frame it! It seems like a dream to see you here in my own house—you and him, I mean. And you've simply got to stay and pay us a visit! The house may look small,

but it's got three rooms in it, not counting a shed."

Agatha, with thanks, assured her of the impossibility of their staying.

"We're busy people just now," she said.

"They say it's just perfectly splendid, what you and him are doing for Gilpin and around there. I guess he feels like he can't do too much for a place where he found you. He just worships the ground you walk on. Anybody can see that."

Agatha smiled to feel herself blush.

"I've finished my potatoes," she said.

But already, Kalmia, of her own accord, was swinging back to her own subjects.

"Excelsior is a real pretty name, isn't it? When you remember the shades of night, and all that. But do you know, Miss Agatha—I can't call you 'Mrs. Strange' to save my life—plenty of people think it's named after the stuffing you put in boxes to keep things from breaking. Of course, it don't make any difference in the world, and it isn't for that, but I do think it might be a real good idea for me to get up a reading circle, or something, to meet around with tea and cake. I used to be awfully bored with the Pierian Society—I guess it was because I was bored with everything that didn't have Ed in it—but this would be real enjoyable, I think.

"Some of them work awful hard, and don't ever have any pleasure—just screwing up their hair in a little knot behind, and going around all day in a wrapper—and gray calico, at that. Of course, they don't set up for much, but they are awfully kind and pleasant. This is Mrs. Shinberger's yellow bowl. She sent me rice pudding in it. She and I are awful good friends, though of course she's fat and don't wear any collar round the house. But if she'd been my own mother, she couldn't have taken any more interest in Ed's leg.

"Oh, Miss Agatha, we did suffer so with it, at first! You know I went right to him, and married him then and there, and I held his hand when they cut it off—his leg, I mean—in spite of everything the doctors could say. You know I always was real spoiled and would have my own way. People at home were always so awful good to me!"

She went in with her potatoes and came out with a pan of tomatoes.

"We just rent here," she went on. "But Ed's got a little piece of land on Giant Joe, and he's thinking of putting it in apples. He says there'll be some profit in raising apples after the new railroad comes, even if you don't like to sell to moonshiners. When we can, we are going to build a little house on it. You can have a real good little house built for twenty-five dollars—though, of course, you'll laugh at that. They say yours is so perfectly lovely."

"It is a very simple little affair, built in a night, almost, like Aladdin's palace," Agatha told her. "I have exactly one maid, and she doesn't seem to be burdened. She's as pretty as a picture—and her name is Jezebel."

"I guess you and he will just come and go," Kalmia said. "They say he's an awful big man."

"Half a head bigger than Ed!" said Agatha.

The two were coming down the frowsy lane from the station, heading toward the back of the house, evidently in the most amicable of conversations. Half a head, indeed, and more, he towered above Ed, cheerfully limping along upon his crutches, and Ed was rather tall; slim, also, with a good, broad

brow, a good, straight nose, good eyes set well apart, and a good, firm chin, redeeming from mere prettiness a delicately shaped face crowned by what the Victorians were wont to term "rich masses of chestnut hair."

"Ed is bringing him to look at his cabbages," Kalmia said. "Ed is simply crazy about his cabbages. If you *will* go on helping, Miss Agatha—which is perfectly ridiculous—you might set the table, and then I know things will be all right. Only you'll have to remember to give me the cracked plate and the burned-handle knife, and it doesn't make any difference about any tumbler for me, and I can sit on a box. Here's everything. I know you-all won't mind having salt and pepper in inkstands!"

It was a very tiny dining room, so it was just as well that there was no side-board nor serving table. Nor were the neatly whitewashed walls cumbered with ornament, displaying only a framed "God Bless Our Home" over the place where the mantel would have been—had there been any mantel.

Despite the cracked plate and the burned-handle knife, the shortage of tumblers, and other small particulars, it was a very dainty little dinner to which Kalmia made ready to summon the men. Her eyes passed approvingly over it and paused at her husband's place. With a light hand she arranged the cutlery beside it.

"You know what I said to you once, Miss Agatha, about—about his saying 'b'ar' and eating with his knife? He's trying not to! But, oh, Miss Agatha, I don't care! There are greater things in life than just manners—aren't there, Miss Agatha?"





# A Matter of Culture

By Laura Ladd Lummis

Author of "The Thousand and First Quarrel," etc.

ILLUSTRATED BY ALBERT HENCKE

You get culture by going abroad. Read how this young man got his in one night on foreign soil.

DOUBTLESS the first words Eve said to Adam, after he came out of the anæsthetic with an aching void where his rib should have been, and found her sitting beside him, were: "When did you first begin to care for me?"

If she didn't, she was the one exception in the history of womankind, and Margery Lawrence, as she sat beside Ted Hewitt admiring her brand-new solitaire ring, followed the precedent established by her ancestors.

Ted was wily, as well as very much in love.

"The first time I saw you, sweetheart, of course. It was all up with me that very minute. Don't you remember?"

An intermission of several minutes' duration ensued.

But Ted's mind returned to that most absorbing topic, even as the pendulum of the clock swings back.

"And how did it ever happen, you darling, that you threw over a prince like Howard Cline for a duffer like me?" he queried.

"Do you really want to know?" hesitated Margery. "Well, it was after your trip to Europe, Ted, that I grew interested."

"My trip to Europe!" echoed Ted. "But what in the world did that have to do with it?"

"Well," ventured Margery, a trifle

uncertainly, "you know I *always* liked you, but the folks at home weren't—didn't exactly approve of you, Ted. You know they're all such highbrows except me, and you're terribly slangy and used to be interested mostly in baseball and fishing and things like that. You asked mother once if George Eliot was the chap who wore his hair pompadoured and the artist's collar, and she nearly fainted. My sister Gertrude said she thought the laundry boy far more intelligent. You don't mind my telling you this, do you? For you know they all dote on you now."

"Sure, I don't mind," answered Ted good-humoredly. "Rub it in all you want. But what made 'em change? That's what I can't see. I know I'm a boob, but——"

"Indeed you're not, Ted Hewitt!" denied Margery indignantly. "You're the best engineer of your age in Colorado. Only, with all your hard work, you haven't had time to acquire culture."

"That's a fact," admitted Ted, looking so crestfallen that Margery's tender heart was smitten and a second intermission followed, longer than the first.

"But mother said," she resumed, "that the cultural value of your trip abroad was simply wonderful. We've been over twice, you know, but even Gertrude doesn't remember half the interesting things you do, and we didn't

see nearly as much as you and Leslie did in one summer. Mother loves to talk to you about it, and I'm almost jealous of Gertrude now. We thought it was so plucky of you and Leslie to work your way across on a cattle ship, but even I wasn't prepared for such a change—so much polish."

During this recital, Ted's jaw had dropped lower and lower, and his eyes threatened to burst from their sockets, like overripe peas from a pod. Before Margery finished, a spasm seemed to shake him, and then he rolled off his chair and lay gasping on the porch floor.

"Ted Hewitt, what's the matter with you? Are you having another attack of appendicitis? Why-ee, you're laughing!" Then, very stiffly, "I'm glad if my poor attempts at conversation can entertain you, I'm sure. I didn't intend to be humorous."

With a gulp that threatened to choke him, Ted swallowed his laughter and, sitting down beside his offended goddess, attempted to offer reparation. After a few vain efforts, he sighed.

"Well, I guess it's up to me to tell you the whole blamed story, Margery, but you've got to promise to be 'silent as the grave,' as the dime novels say. You'll go on loving me just the same, won't you?" he entreated.

Just how large a factor in overcoming her anger was Margery's curiosity, will never be known. At any rate, the intermission was startlingly short, and the curtain went up for the last act with the two amicably seated in the porch swing, and Ted puffing at his pipe.

"I've never told even my own folks all that Les Thompson and I went through on that cattle-boat trip. It was awful. The food was fierce, and even if it had been decent, the stench was so bad it killed your appetite. You couldn't get away from it anywhere on the ship. In fact, I felt as if it followed me for months. We were



"And how did it ever happen, you darling, that you threw over a prince like Howard Cline for a duffer like me?" he queried.

both rotten bad sailors, and sick as we were, we had to keep on working all day, for we were short-handed, and those blooming cows had to be fed and watered and cleaned up at regular intervals. The only happy time we knew was at night, for we were so dog-tired we didn't even mind the beds or remember to be seasick.

"When we got to Liverpool, however, we perked up, and after we'd put our bags and wheels—you remember we were going to ride through rural England—in a boarding house, where we were to spend the night, we decided to go out and see the sights of Liverpool. We looked pretty rough, being still in our working togs, but the Liverpool we had seen didn't look very dressy either, so we weren't worrying. Fact was neither of us had had a shave for four or five days. I hope you'll never see me with a five days' growth of beard, honey," he interpolated. "Nothing I could say or do would ever make it right again."

Margery glanced at his black brows and clean-shaven chin of that blue tone peculiar to some heavily bearded men. She could imagine Ted as he had looked in Liverpool.

"Liverpool is the dumping place of all the ships afloat," went on Ted, having filled his pipe anew. "I suppose it's the toughest city in the British Isles. There's probably a perfectly good, aristocratic part, but the part a sailor sees is pretty lively, I can tell you. A number of times that evening I saw half a dozen girls—factory girls, I suppose—reeling along the sidewalk arm in arm, uproariously drunk.

"About two o'clock, we'd seen enough and were ready to turn in. Next day we intended to dress up and begin our real tour. Didn't have much money, but we had pipe dreams of adding to our bank account en route.

"We took a bus that ran near our boarding house and started home.

There weren't many passengers. You know how those London busses poke along and you jump on and off. Pretty soon three men clambered on, with some difficulty, as they were all considerably the worse for wear. One was so stewed his two friends had fairly to pull him up the steps and drag him along. They sat down on the same side with Les, and all went to sleep. I was getting drowsy myself, but I noticed that two of the men got off at different streets, each hiccuping a good night to their friend, who was too drunk to answer. He was sitting in the farthest corner, and Les was nearer to him than I was. Once I glanced up and saw Les staring at his tie. You know old Les' taste in ties. I supposed he was admiring it because it was red. In a few minutes he touched me on the arm.

"We get off here," he said quietly.

"Why, you blithering idiot! I ejaculated. 'This is miles and miles from Mrs. Girton's happy home!'

"We'll get off here," he insisted, increasing the pressure on my arm.

"I was blustering some more when I caught sight of his face. The fellow was as white as paper. Now I've known Les a long time, and I've come to the conclusion that he's a pretty wise old coyote. There was some good reason why he wanted to get off at that corner. I didn't know what it could be, but I thought I'd better move. Perhaps he'd seen a long-lost relative, with a million-dollar bank account that I'd never heard of, disappearing around the corner. You're always reading about such things. Anyway, I got off. Only the drunk was left in the bus, and he was too far gone to know street or number. I wondered if he'd gone past his corner.

"We walked a couple of blocks in the opposite direction without speaking. Then I began to think of my downy cot.



"Why, you blithering idiot!" I ejaculated. "This is miles and miles from Mrs. Girton's happy home!"

"Of course," I said sarcastically to Les, "I hate to seem to interfere with your previous plans or to be unduly

curious, but would you mind telling me where we're going?"

"Shut up! I don't know."

"Don't know!" I gasped. "Well, of all the fool stunts I ever heard of! Are you drunk, too? That guy's breath next you must have gone to your head."

"No," answered Les softly. "His breath didn't bother me, because he hadn't any. His throat was cut from ear to ear."

"Honey girl, I can't tell you all about that night. Here we were dressed like the rest of the toughs, not too clean, unshaven, and with absolutely not an acquaintance in the country. We hadn't even passports; so many people had told us they wouldn't be necessary unless we were going into Russia. I suppose, as the prayer book says, we did those things we should not have done and left undone those things we should have done, but we weren't at all sure the British bobbies would have mercy upon us.

"All night we walked up and down, and in the early morning found a secondhand clothing store, where we bought some hand-me-downs and had a shave. In this return to ourselves, we felt quite disguised and, after a cup of coffee, even cheerful, until we bought a paper. Then we struck earth hard, for on the front page was an account of a mysterious murder in an omnibus. It seems that the bus had gone to the end of the line, and when the bus man had shaken his sleepy passenger, his head had fallen back, disclosing that ghastly throat, and the blood had trickled down the seat, quite upsetting the conductor's nerves.

"The victim was an American, and that most intelligent Englishman finally remembered that two rough-looking Americans had been with him. He was sure they were Americans by their flat 'a.' His graphic description of me will ever keep incipient germs of conceit from developing.

"I'll confess to you, honeyest, that we were paralyzed. We were only college kids and pretty green at that, and

we'd heard tales of the iron-cast English law. I suppose we should have gone straight to the American consul, but even if we had been sure of acquittal, we didn't want to spend our vacation in an English jail waiting trial.

"Finally we braced up sufficiently to go to a steamship company, and found that we had just money enough for two steerage tickets home. There was a boat at twelve. Traveling steerage might seem a hardship to some people, but it fairly smacked of luxury to us.

"We stayed in New York all summer and worked. But in our spare time we studied up on European sights. We read volumes of travel from the library, and art books, and we fairly lived with a Baedeker in our hands. We got so we could hardly believe ourselves that we had spent only one night on foreign soil.

"They never found the villains of the play. Les and I couldn't have told one enlightening fact about them, for we were sleepy when they came into the bus and they wore their hats low over their eyes.

"I expect we got as much good from our reading as if we'd taken the grand tour, but I never knew until to-night how much I owed to those evenings in the shade of the sheltering student lamp. I knew it was lots easier to talk to the people who love to say, 'When you were abroad, did you——' But to think that's how I won you!"

"But—but," challenged Margery, wriggling out of his grasp, "this just proves that you were cultured underneath all your slang when you had time and opportunity to bring it out. Let me tell the story to the family."

"Not on your life, sweetheart!" affirmed Ted with emphasis. "Please allow the glamour that my trip abroad has cast over me to remain. I worked hard enough for it, Heaven knows!"

So if you live in Mason City, don't you tell!



# McAndrews Was Right

By Maude Parker

ILLUSTRATED BY MAYO BUNKER

A love story with a big surprise for an unselfish hero and a self-sacrificing stenographer.

THE young July sun, streaming in beneath the cracked green shade, fell across Preston's closed eyes, and he awoke with a start.

A sense of expectancy, vague, but bringing with it potential happiness, caused him to whistle as he grabbed a towel and soap dish. Not until he was in the bathroom did he realize the futile basis of his expectancy; his song stopped short, and the lodger in the adjoining room snored again.

In the sudden grip of depression, Preston looked into the shaving mirror to see the face of a man who, though twenty-five years old, was unable to raise five hundred dollars. But the reflection offered no solution. In himself he saw integrity of spirit; in his brown eyes there was intelligence, and in his firmly molded lips determination.

"But honesty doesn't count," he thought bitterly. "A plodder doesn't get anywhere."

In his own room again, as he gazed at the tiny snapshot of The Girl, his defiance changed into a more stirring emotion, for his inability to obtain five hundred dollars would mean losing even a chance with her. His present circumstances kept him from even hinting his love to her, while the "Gamester," on the other hand, won huge stakes, gave the impression of having unlimited funds, and spent more and more time with her.

During the moments in which Pres-

ton dressed and hurriedly ate breakfast in a white-tiled lunch room, his thoughts revolved in a circle, sometimes with the money as an axis, sometimes with the Gamester, sometimes with the patent, but usually with The Girl.

"If I weren't such an old plodder, I'd have more than two hundred and fifty dollars, and then I could pay McAndrews five hundred, and he'd manufacture the patent. And if he did, I'd be in a position to tell Margaret that I love her."

"I'll never earn over one hundred dollars a month with the Plutocrat Company. But I won't be able to see Margaret every day if I leave."

"And if I *do* stay and plod along, I'll never have enough to get the patent started, and Margaret may marry the Gamester and I'll lose her, anyway."

He drank a second cup of coffee.

"I've got only myself to blame," he reflected. "It's just my inherent plodding and being so confoundedly honest. Always at the office ahead of time—and earning about a fourth as much as the men who are always late!"

He reached for his straw hat.

Having opened the luxurious Plutocrat office, in which the canny owners had successfully shown that a place of business may resemble a private library, Preston unlocked the safe, got out his books, and opened the morning paper.

From an inside sheet, a swarthy face grinned up at him. Below the picture

he read, "Dare-devil Hero of Racing World—Jim Hartigan, Known as the 'Gamester.'"

Preston swore under his breath—not because he envied the Gamester this notoriety, but because he was constantly hurt by the interest Margaret Claridge seemed to feel in the other man. The situation seemed so unbearably unfair, for it was because of his own fineness of feeling that he could not compete with this coarse, swaggering racer.

"I guess there are streaks in women that men just can't understand," he concluded.

He thought of his mother and wished that she were alive, for she would have liked Margaret and have been pleased with his choice. She would have understood, too, his feeling that, in view of Margaret's superiority, he could not tell her of his love until he was sure of some dignity of financial position. The circumstances that had kept him from his other ambitions had always hurt her so.

After graduation from high school in his home town in Missouri, Preston had gone to a business college in order to pay part of his expenses at the State university by secretarial work. For a year, he had been able to manage, but at the beginning of his sophomore year, his father had died, and he had refused to let his mother send him any money from her small income. At Christmas, having washed dishes to pay for his board and done house chores to pay for a room, in addition to doing stenographic work for a nervous professor and taking extra courses in mechanical engineering, his vitality had been so lowered that he had been an easy victim for a large, eager typhoid germ.

When he had finally recovered, it was spring, and his mother's resources had been so drained by his illness that his continuance at college had been out of the question. Therefore, the business training, which he had supposed

would be only a stepping-stone toward a profession, had had to serve as their support.

"The best boy in the world," had been his mother's last words.

When she had died a year before, Preston had been twenty-four, with five years of pegging away at intolerable desk work behind him. All of his spare time had been spent on his patent, which had developed into an automobile door opener of undoubted merit, could he but find the means of presenting it to the public.

Like most ambitious young men, Preston had gone directly to New York. Like the others, he had gained much there, but not in material advantages. The year had taught him many lessons, but had not brought him wealth or much in the way of opportunity. He had rented a cheap room, with the expectation of moving as soon as he had had a chance to exploit his patent; like most of the others, he had never moved. And finally necessity had driven him to seek a position so that he could afford even that room, for although the men to whom he had talked concerning the patent were willing to handle it providing he could invest capital with it, they would not buy it outright.

Again his despised ability to keep books had served, and he had secured a position with the Plutocrat Car Company, hoping to meet men there who might be interested in the patent, for no discouragements had shaken his faith. With the exception of his expenditures for food and lodging, for the clothes that were necessary to conform to the Plutocrat standards, and for an occasional book for Margaret Claridge, he had hoarded all of his salary.

On top of his bank book, Preston placed a letter, the arrival of which a few days before had caused him great joy. Now that he realized the tantaliz-

ing impossibility of its opportunity, he hated its familiar words:

DEAR MR. PRESTON:  
In regard to your patent, would say that, while the market is flooded with novelties, we believe there is merit in your door opener. We are willing to go ahead with its manufacture if you will put up five hundred dollars (\$500) toward the expense of making first lot. We must insist on this, because our patent attorney, who is away at present, will not be able to report to us on your patent for some time. Though you have submitted your documents, we do not feel like taking the whole risk without some evidence of good faith on your part. We have met your terms as to royalty agreement, and our present request must appeal to you as being reasonable.

The season is late, and any further delay will prevent our undertaking the manufacture of your article. Therefore we must ask you to let us know definitely before the twentieth instant what you will do. Very truly yours,

McANDREWS MECHANICAL COMPANY,  
J. B. McANDREWS.

And the calendar said July 19th, and his bank book, \$253.67!

The outer door opened.

"Good morning!" said The Girl.

The letter, the bank book, the calendar, and the newspaper fell to the floor in a symbolic heap, as Preston rose.

Margaret Claridge, whose soft brown hair had been blown about her faintly pink cheeks in her ride on the top of a



"Whadda I mean? I mean that if you wanta sell imitation rocks, you'd better go out and find some sucker like yourself, but don't come bothering us."

bus, seemed to Preston the most beautiful and desirable woman in the world.

"Mr. Roberts has gone to Narragansett Pier for a few days, so there won't be much work to-day," she announced, hanging up the jacket of her blue-gray linen suit, which matched the color of her deep-set, black-fringed eyes.

As she seated herself at her big mahogany desk, sorting out the mail, the man watched her slim, graceful hands so intently that, becoming conscious of his gaze, they went instinctively to her

hair, her belt, and the pin that fastened the collar of her soft white blouse.

"Oh, there's nothing the matter with you," he assured her. "It's all my disagreeable self. I'm sorry Roberts has gone. In spite of the heat, I'd rather work than loaf to-day."

Margaret tossed a package of papers onto his desk.

"Just look these over, will you? Mr. Roberts asked me to stay late last night, so that they could be cleared up to-day."

Preston felt the first leap of joy since the arrival of the letter. So she had not lingered at the office, because the Gamester had been there! But when he saw the girl frowning over her bank book, he thought at once of the pathetic state of his own, and his pleasure was gone. He tried the accounts, but could not concentrate.

Suddenly he looked up; Margaret was staring at him. When he glanced at her, she lowered her eyes and began putting down some figures. Her entire manner had changed. Usually her greatest charm lay in the directness with which she looked at one out of her beautiful eyes, the frank humor of her firm lips, and her sureness of bearing. For the first time, she appeared to Preston's sensitive eyes embarrassed and ill at ease.

"How's the youngster?" he asked.

"All right. That is, better. I'm worried about him."

"There's no danger, is there?"

"Oh, no—there's no danger."

Intuitively the man perceived the connection between her distraught manner and her figuring.

"You mean the hospital bills?"

She winced, and the pink of her cheeks deepened.

"Mr. Preston, I'm going to tell you something, and you're going to disprove."

"Oh, don't let her be engaged!" was his one thought.

As the girl talked, she straightened the blotters and paraphernalia on her desk nervously.

"The youngster's bills have been stupendous. They amount to—that is, I must have—several hundred dollars immediately."

"Whew!" said the man.

"And I have almost nothing in the bank."

She put her hand into her skirt pocket and drew out a small object. Before Preston could see anything of it except its sparkle, she replaced it and clasped her hands upon the green blotter that covered the top of her desk. She looked at him defiantly.

"I suppose you think a girl ought not to accept jewelry from a man?"

A feeling of mental nausea came over him.

"I don't know that I've ever given the matter much thought," he said at last. "But——"

"But of course you think it's wrong. I did once, too."

She held up a heavy gold ring, in the center of which a large diamond sparkled.

Preston gasped.

"Who——" he began.

"The Gamester," she replied promptly, with the manner of one who would hasten disagreeable work. "He was here yesterday and urged me to take his ring. He said I didn't have to wear it, or even keep it—that I could throw it away if I wanted to, but that he couldn't take it around the race tracks with him."

Preston was benumbed by the thought that The Girl must be put with the rest of his shattered idols. With her next words, his dull pain became acute.

"So, since he'll be gone for at least a month, I'm going to pawn the ring. I can redeem it."

There were tears in her eyes. Suddenly he saw that he had misunder-

stood her. She loved the Gamester! Otherwise, she could not have taken the ring and felt free to use it for hospital bills. Well, there was nothing to be done. Life was only a fearful, grinning farce, anyway.

He laughed.

But when he saw that Margaret had turned her face away, his emotion changed. He must not give up. Even if she were weak, and unable to see values, he loved her and he must fight.

"Send the ring back to him, Margaret," he said earnestly. "Let me lend you the money."

"You don't understand." She looked at him with the old expression of directness, but there was no longer any color in her cheeks. "You must take my word for it that it's all right. You ought to know me better than to suspect anything else. I'm under no obligations to Hartigan. He said to give the ring away if I didn't want to keep it. This is an emergency; there is no other way."

"Yes, there is. I said that I could lend you the money." He laughed apologetically. "Or at least two hundred and fifty."

"I wouldn't *think* of taking your money that you've saved for the patent! Before long, you'll get an offer, and then—"

"And then I won't have enough anyway, so you might as well have it. Besides, I'd rather give up my chances than have you do this."

He was tempted to tell her of the McAndrews offer, to prove to her that his paltry savings did not help, but desisted. It was evident that the man upon whom she chose to lean must have strength of the ostentatious kind.

Margaret opened her pocketbook and put the ring into it.

"Will you take care of the office while I'm gone?" she said.

"Oh, Margaret, *please* let me lend you the money! It would make me so

happy! Then you could send the ring back."

"No, I couldn't. I have no idea where the Gamester is. When he comes back to New York, I'll have the ring."

Preston realized that he was beaten.

"Then you must let me pawn the ring. I can get more for it than you can, for I know the ropes. Finish your letters, and I'll be back presently."

"Will you really do it?"

"Of course I will, since it's a question of your doing it or my doing it. Oh, why won't you let *me* help you?"

"I will not. That's final."

"Then give me the ring."

He put it into his pocket hastily, as if it were a poisonous thing. Grabbing his hat, he hurried out of the door, afraid to look at Margaret, lest, in this new emotional crisis, he forget that he had no right to tell her of his love. For the first time he felt stronger than she, but had no contempt for her—only a desire to help. Never had his poverty been so bitter.

During the ten-minute car ride, he forced himself into that paralysis of thought which is termed stoicism. Inside the pawnshop, he drew the ring from his pocket with a deliberate air. When he had visited this place before, he had felt as if his own cuff links had been stolen from a corpse, but now nothing mattered.

The clerk's black eyes snapped.

"Say, whatcha trying to do—kid somebody?" he asked.

"I don't understand," replied Preston, which was not quite true, for he supposed that the man thought he had secured the ring by dishonest methods.

"No, you don't seem to understand. We've been in business for forty years, and we ain't handing out premiums for glass at this late day. Do you get that?"

"What do you mean?"

"Whadda I mean? I mean that if you wanta sell imitation rocks, you'd





"Know what's the matter with this young man, Miss Claridge?"

better go out and find some sucker like yourself, but don't come bothering us."

He threw the ring onto the counter, and as Preston picked it up and looked at it for the first time, he joined in his sardonic laugh.

Then he walked out of the store. So the ring for which Margaret Claridge had given up her ideals, and broken his heart, was only imitation! What fun the gods must have!

But as he continued to laugh, the memory of the girl's honest eyes when she had said, "This is an emergency; you must take my word for it that it is all right," came to him. The solution must lie in her engagement to the Gamester. Of course she must love

him, or she could not use his ring to pay her brother's bills. That was what she meant by "all right." But she had said that it was an emergency. What would she do now?

He faced about.

Half an hour later, when he entered the Plutocrat office, he carried a large bundle wrapped in tissue paper and a square box, which he deposited on Margaret's desk.

"Oh—what roses!" she cried, burying her face in the pink flowers. "And candy, too! I ought to scold you for this!"

"But you're not going to."

He handed her the roll of bills.

"Two hundred and fifty—all I could get."

"I'm not going to try to thank you," she said gratefully, putting on her hat. "But I'll be back soon."

Alone, Preston endeavored to become absorbed in his accounts. But as he added the columns of figures, representing sums too large for his realization, the thought came again and again:

"No more hope. I'm doomed now. A lifetime of this! A lifetime of twenty-five a week and hall bedrooms and quick-lunch restaurants! A lifetime of keeping books!"

Yet it was not these things that appalled him. It was something much deeper—something that had to do with his fundamental integrity as a person. During the years in which he had

worked at uncongenial tasks in uncongenial surroundings, he had felt that it was merely a temporary phase during which he chose to submerge his real personality so that he might, when opportunity came, develop that personality. But now the opportunity was before him. He could not meet it; so what *was* he but an automaton? Was not his real personality that which was represented by his mechanical labor—not the creative spirit he had believed was his?

Hope was gone. It had been difficult to obtain two hundred and fifty dollars, but it would take two years to save five hundred. Two years! And he knew well that if the McAndrews Company were willing to manufacture his patent with only a small advance from him, before those two years were up another door opener would appear on the market, just different enough to prevent proof of infringement.

But through *The Girl* the unbearable hurt had come. He opened the discarded newspaper to look at the face of the Gamester. This was the kind of man who succeeded—this cheap, insincere sport; this man whose dishonesty Preston had covered, so that the girl who had been tricked into loving him by his superficial swagger might never know.

But the man's debauch of self-pity was broken by the entrance of *The Girl*, whose cheeks were flushed and whose blue-gray eyes sparkled.

"Was it enough?" he queried, his despondency mitigated somewhat by the careful way in which she replaced the rose she had worn in the glass with the others.

"Yes, indeed!"

She sat down at her desk and made notes of letters to dictate. It was plain that her departure from dignity in accepting the Gamester's help had not disturbed her. On the contrary, she seemed gayly happy. The man mar-

veled anew at the mysteries of the feminine mind, but he accepted her mood without analysis, since in its radiance he could not be totally depressed.

Upon returning from luncheon, which unfortunately Preston and *The Girl* ate at separate hours, he entered the street door just behind a short, rotund man in a tight linen suit that emphasized the rolls of fat beneath his shoulder blades.

"Are you Mr. Everett Preston?" he inquired.

"I am. Won't you sit down?"

"I'm McAndrews—of McAndrews Mechanical Company. Wrote you the other day about a patent."

Removing his panama hat, McAndrews wiped the inside band with a large handkerchief, and then mopped his perspiring face.

"Made you unusual offer, Mr. Preston. Unusual, I must say. Market flooded with patent devices for automobiles. Very little sale for them—very little."

"So you wrote me," the younger man replied, conscious that Margaret was staring at them with eager eyes. Suddenly he regretted not having told her of the offer.

McAndrews crossed one short, fat leg over the other, and swung his tancled foot as he jerked out his sentences.

"We only handle things that we know will sell, Mr. Preston. Absolutely necessary. Would fail if we didn't. But your patent, now. Something else again. Clever idea. Money in it."

Preston felt as if he were in a dream. After all these years, the thing for which he had waited materializing only to be totally beyond his reach!

"Asked you to let us know by the twentieth," McAndrews continued. "Would like to have your answer to-day."

He drew a large watch from the end of a heavy chain, which rendered a conspicuous part of him more conspicuous,

and assumed the attitude of a time-keeper.

"You said five hundred, didn't you?" Preston asked idly.

The thought of telling the man that he had not a cent was fearful, especially in front of Margaret. If only she would go out to lunch! But she had turned toward them and was listening intently.

"So I said. Five hundred. Too steep?"

"Too steep," said Preston mechanically, ashamed to look at Margaret, although he had told her once, in a burst of confidence, about his savings.

"All right. I'll come down. Unusual thing for us to do. Especially unusual because our patent attorney's away. Told you about that in the letter, though. We'll split the difference. Turn over the patent and two hundred and fifty and we'll start manufacture at once." He rose with an air of finality. "Settled?" he said.

Preston stood beside him, endeavoring to look down at the little man with great dignity, but in his eyes there was the expression of wonder that comes to children who are hurt beyond endurance.

"Yes, it's settled," he repeated, conscious of the sound of his own voice. "It's settled. I can't do it. I'm sorry. I appreciate your offer, but it's impossible."

Margaret uttered a cry, but Preston did not look at her. McAndrews, however, turned.

"Know what's the matter with this young man, Miss Claridge?"

She shook her head.

"Hardly customary for us to beg inventors. Usually other way. Reconsidered?"

Preston spoke with firmness.

"I can't accept your offer, Mr. McAndrews, and I shan't reconsider. Good morning."

He sat down and opened his ledger.

McAndrews gasped, looked at Margaret, then threw up his hands in disgust and amazement.

The door banged after him. Margaret ran over to Preston's desk.

"Oh, what's the matter?" she asked.

He looked at her anxiously, more excited by the depth of interest in her warm voice than by the reasons for it.

"There's nothing the matter. I'm not going to accept the offer, that's all!"

"But, Everett, there must be *some* reason! You've said so often that you'd rather sell the patent to McAndrews than to any one else, and their offer was so reasonable. Have you had a better one?"

Feeling that the torture of the day was to continue indefinitely, Preston explained somewhat shakily that some one else was considering it, but, pressed for details, declared that it was a secret.

To divert her attention, he pointed to a low yellow racing car that had stopped in front of the office.

"Looks like the Gamester's," he said.

And then the Gamester himself, complete in leather knickerbockers, gaiters, and cap, stepped out of the car and came directly into the office.

Unconsciously Preston began to whistle "The End of a Perfect Day" under his breath.

"You two here alone?" were the Gamester's first words.

"Oh, yes—we often are," replied Margaret.

"She loves him, all right," thought Preston, "for she's even trying to make him jealous."

Apparently she succeeded, for although he did not turn around, he recognized in Hartigan's voice a defiant note different from his customary good nature. Without hearing their conversation, he realized that something was wrong. There was fierce joy in the thought that it was he, and not the Gamester, who had helped The Girl.



"The next time you give a ring to a girl, try and get a better imitation. That's all. Now get out!"

Suddenly he heard the word "ring" and he listened, wondering if his thoughts had not made him imagine it. He heard it again. The Gamester, evidently very angry, was talking excitedly to The Girl, whose cheeks were scarlet and whose hands clasped tightly behind her.

"But you took it!" cried the man.

Margaret's answer was inaudible.

The Gamester continued, crushing his leather cap in his large brown hands:

"Well, what if I did? Do you think I gave it to you to put on top of the piano?"

"You said that I could throw it away if I wanted to," came Margaret's voice.

"Well, I'm not such a fool as some people seem to think. Who is this fellow you've been talking to McAndrews about?"

This brought Preston to his feet.

The Gamester addressed him for the first time.

"I'd like to have a little private conversation with you, Preston," he called.

"I see you've got a hand in this."

"He has not!" cried Margaret.

"Perhaps I have," said Preston, walking toward them.

The bright sun, streaming in through the dull blue curtains, fell upon the sun-burned face of the Gamester. His dark eyes snapped, and in his heavy-featured face there was a sinister expression. Margaret shrank from him, as if for the first time she saw him without the mask of geniality that had won for him his sobriquet.

"I shall be glad to talk to you alone," Preston continued.

"No, you won't!" declared Margaret. "You men can say what you want to say in front of me."

"Is that so?" shouted the Gamester. "Well, if you can stand it, I guess I can. Now, yesterday evening I gave this young lady a diamond ring. Everybody knows what that means. Well, to-day I come back to town unexpectedly, and, talking to a friend of mine at the McAndrews Company, I find that she's been over there twice lately, to see the boss about a fellow named Preston. A girl that's wearing my ring—or at least ought to be! And to complete the double cross, I find when I get here that she's *not* wearing the ring, and what's more, she says she hasn't got it. Now what I want to know is where it is!"

"Are you quite through?" asked Preston quietly.

"No, I'm not! I want my ring and I want it *now*! Do you understand?"

"Didn't you tell Miss Claridge that she could throw the ring away if she didn't want it?"

"None of your business what I told her! I want the ring and I want it *now*! If I don't get——"

"Oh, keep still, Hartigan," said Preston, in even tones. "You're barking up the wrong tree. You're apt to say a lot of things you don't mean, and if I were you, I'd stop now."

He turned on his heel and walked back to his desk. It was beneath his dignity to quarrel with a man like the Gamester, even though he held a crush-

ing weapon in his knowledge of the ring.

"You see the thanks you get for your trouble for *him*!" sneered the Gamester. "He's not even man enough to stand up for you."

That sentence overruled all qualms; it touched some spring that made Preston thirst for blood. Outwardly he was calm, but his nostrils quivered as he talked.

"Come over here!" he cried. "And come quick!"

The Gamester came.

Preston held out to him a massive gold ring, in the center of which a large stone gleamed.

"So you gave it to *him*?" Hartigan accused.

"No, she didn't. She happened to drop this—valuable bit of windowpane—on the floor, and before putting it into the wastebasket, I slipped it into my pocket. Now take it, and then go out and get into your little automobile and run away. But the next time you give a ring to a girl, try and get a better imitation. That's all. Now get out!"

The Gamester pocketed the ring. He opened his mouth, but no words came. He walked out of the office, and a moment later they saw him cranking his low yellow car in violent haste.

Preston and The Girl faced each other. Then, because they had both undergone much emotional stress, they laughed.

"Why didn't you tell me about the ring?" she demanded, looking at him through tear-blurred eyes.

"Why didn't you tell me that you had seen McAndrews?" he retorted, and his own eyes were moist.

As they continued to look at each other, so many things were made plain to them that they laughed again, more joyously.

"Oh, Margaret, you don't mean——"

"That I used your own money to pay for the rest of the five hundred for the



patent? Yes! I rode downtown with McAndrews the other day, and he told me that he had offered to buy it if you'd put up five hundred, and I knew you hadn't that much, and brother's illness had drained my bank account so I couldn't help, but made up my mind that I'd get it in some way. Mr. Roberts didn't want me to get so far behind with my salary, and I couldn't tell him that it was for you, so I was desperate.

"Then last night the Gamester came in. I know you've always thought it queer that I should like him at all, and now I see that you're right, but before I've always looked upon him as a good-natured fellow who never had a chance, and he came to me for advice, and I suppose that flattered me. Last night he insisted that I should take the ring. It seemed so reasonable when he talked about it—said he had no one else to give it to, and if I would only keep it for him while he was around the race tracks, it would be a great favor to him. It seemed like the chance to get the extra money for your patent, so I took it. This morning I took the money I supposed you had got for it and deposited it for you at the McAndrews Company."

But this time, as they looked at each other, they did not laugh.

Just as the man took both of her slim, ringless hands in his, the telephone bell, as an intruder, caused them to jump. Preston lifted the receiver.

"Yes, this is he. Oh, yes, Mr. McAndrews. . . . You say you are back at your office— Oh, yes. . . . Yes, I know some money was left there on my account. . . . What's that? . . . Yes, yes, yes! Of course. . . . Exactly so. I reconsidered."

"Margaret! Margaret!" he cried, as his arms went about her. "So you didn't see McAndrews when you left the money?"

Her face was half hidden in the rough fabric of his coat sleeve, but he heard her low:

"No. I left it with the cashier. I just marked it for McAndrews, as if it were from you."

"Well, listen—listen!"

She raised her wonderful eyes to his.

"He hadn't heard about that money when he came over here. He just came over on his own willful, blessed hook to cut the price in two. He says— Well, listen to what he says! He thinks I sent the two-fifty over. And the deal is on!"

Their first kiss was almost spoiled by too great a commercial joy.

After some time, the man, still holding her hands as if he expected her to fade away, said:

"McAndrews is a pretty good business man, too, I tell you. Know what he said? Said I'd better take you in as my partner. What do you think of that?"

"He means as *guardian*!" replied The Girl.

## "The Third Year"

By E. S. and J. F. Dorrance

The first installment of an exciting two-part mystery story that will appear in the next number of SMITH'S.



## "The Truth About the Violin"

By Ethel Shackelford

is one of the cleverest short stories we have published this year. Look for it in the November number.

# When Jill Came Tumbling After

By Grace Lea Army

Author of "The House That Jack Built," "The One Chance," etc.

ILLUSTRATED BY H. F. NONNAMAKER

Another story of Jack and Jill—a typical, newly-married couple—by the author of "The House That Jack Built."

OF all the people underneath the sun, Jack's mother was the first to plant the seed of domestic tragedy in Jill's mind. At that, the thing was farthest from her intentions. She happened to be speaking of Jack to Jill one day, and all unconsciously trod upon a hidden mine.

"Jack has his little faults, my dear," she said, "but there's one comforting thing—he's such a home body. So many men are not—after the honeymoon is over. But Jack—I hesitate to speak to you about such matters; you're only a child; though you are married. But, my dear, you must know that so many marriages are unhappy because of other women——"

"I know!" breathed Jill, her eyes like saucers and her cheeks quite pink.

Her education was complete; she read the magazines and newspapers and a novel now and then, went to the theater and to moving-picture shows—Oh, Jill knew life. But speaking of that life—and Jack—even to Jack's mother, brought the color to her cheeks.

"Well—you need never fear that sort of thing with Jack!"

By which very denial, you see, the idea was registered upon Jill's mind. And such things need but a word—a look—a vague suspicion now and then, to make them grow past all believing.

Kitty prodded the idea at intervals of a day or so.

Kitty was a chum of Jill's who had

been married a month before Jill had, and she came frequently to "talk husbands," as she said. She was bold and dashing, was Kitty, with a profile like a certain lady on the coin of the realm, and her jealousy of her somewhat insignificant husband was an obsession.

"And, my dear—the way that creature looked at him!" she'd say to Jill. "Of course the car was crowded, and there were two or three other men back there with Walt—but I know she was looking at him! She didn't know that I saw her!"

"But, Kitty," urged Jill, "Walt's just crazy about you!"

"I know he is—I'm perfectly sure he is. But all the same, I'm just as glad I was along."

At this Jill was agast.

"But, Kitty! You trust Walt, don't you?" Not to trust Jack would have seemed sacrilege to Jill.

"Trust him? Of course I do—if the poor man's by himself. But with some designing female hovering near——"

"What difference would that make—when he's married?" Jill's eyes were wonder wide; there was a tiny wrinkle drawn between them. But Kitty laughed at her.

"Oh, Jill!" she cried. "You innocent! What if a man is married? We're only poor, weak mortals after all."

Her air of wisdom nettled Jill.

"You think that when you marry a man, that's the end of worrying about him?" Kitty further instructed her. "My dear, it isn't so! We're little sillies to get such ideas into our heads. It may have been true in the days of our grandmothers—when they married a man he may have stayed put—some of them. But nowadays!"

"What—makes—it different now, Kitty?" asked Jill.

She couldn't share Kitty's views, but the subject fascinated her. She sat in a big wicker chair, and her lap and the arms of the chair were filled with socks in various stages of being darned. She had not yet lost her pride in doing things for Jack. She felt in her gay silk work bag for her darning thread with a most housewifely air.

"The difference," decreed Kitty wisely, "is all this feminist nonsense you read about, my dear. Women seem to think that because a man's married is no reason at all for their not flirting with him. A wedding ring makes absolutely no difference. I made Walt get one when we were married. I told him I liked the sentiment. What I really thought was that it would be something like a sign—'Keep off the grass!' But not a bit of it!"

Jill leaned her head back in her chair and laughed. Kitty was so vehement.

"I'd hate to feel like that about Jack," she said. A delicious warmth ran through her veins as she thought how absolutely she trusted Jack.

"You're very fortunate—to feel that way," said Kitty.

There was the faintest suggestion of repression in her voice. It said as plainly as only such suggestions can: "But Jack's no more to be trusted than any other man!"

Jill noticed it, and that night she questioned Jack. She sat on the arm of his chair while he read—or was supposed to read—his paper.

"Jack," she said, "are men—married

men, I mean—do they flirt? Are they always being run after by women who aren't their wives?"

"Eh? What's all that?" cried Jack, and the paper slid from his knee to the floor. "Jill—you've been into my De Maupassant!"

"I certainly have not! What do you mean?"

"Well, where did you get these notions, then?"

"Kitty was here to-day——"

"Oh, Kitty!" said Jack, and grinned. "So Kitty's getting on to Walt?" There was a chuckle in Jack's laughter, the significance of which it was impossible to miss. Thus Jack himself encouraged the maggot in Jill's brain.

At the very first opportunity, Jill read De Maupassant, and was sorry she had done it. She looked at herself in the glass and expected to see a weary woman of the world after she had read one volume.

"Ugh!" she told herself. "I feel as if I had crawled through the mud! What a nasty-minded creature he must have been!"

But after the first feeling of disgust had faded, the skeleton of facts recurred to her.

And then—Jack stumbled; at least Jill thought he did.

Kitty had been to see her one afternoon, and had talked, as usual, of Walt and his escapes from feminine clutches. She touched, quite lengthily, upon the wiles of shopgirls to attract.

"You watch them, dear. I never let Walt shop for me," she said.

Jill laughed. It was a pleasant afternoon, an eight-month anniversary of Jill's wedding day, and Jack had sent her roses—a modest offering compared to what he used to send, but it was the week when gas and telephone and electric-light bills clamored to be paid. Jill understood.

And Jack brought a friend from the office home to dinner. Jill, in a rose-



"Jack," she said, "are men—married men, I mean—do they flirt?"

colored frock, presided over a dinner that she had prepared every bit herself, from the cream-of-tomato soup to the cake and coffee that was dessert, and Jack was filled with pride.

The man from the office was not married. He had known Jack several years and thought Jill a "little queen," but he had vague ideas as to what to tell a newly married girl.

"You know, Mrs. Jack," he said—Jill liked that name—"you'll have to keep an eye on this boy over

here." His unsuspecting victim beamed through the haze of marital bliss that enveloped him just then. (The salad was excellent, the kind men like—lettuce, tomatoes, and mayonnaise—no frills.) And Jill smiled responsively, eyes brown velvet, red lips curved in a most winning hostess smile. "I took him downtown to-day," babbled the blundering male, "and into one of the department stores for some things I needed"—like a malignant echo, Kitty's words woke in Jill's mind and cast a

shadow in her eyes—"and I wish you could have seen the hit he made!"

Jill's brows arched questioningly, her dimple wavered, not knowing whether to countenance the joke.

"There's a little girl at the handkerchief counter who waits on me—she's a nice, friendly little thing—and I introduced Jack to her to-day. 'This is my shy young married friend,' I said, and I wish you could have seen the look she gave him! She had his number right away. 'Shy—with those eyes!' she said. She has some dreamy eyes herself, eh, Jack? Oh, I say, old man—such blushes!"

Jack's face was crimson. He seemed, to Jill, to laugh in a guilty way. Jill's dimple fled incontinently, although her lips smiled sweetly—too sweetly, another woman would have said. The color deepened in her cheeks, her voice was just a trifle strained.

"Jack's sensitive. You mustn't laugh at him," she said. "Won't you have an olive?"

Jack smiled at her across his roses. The sight of her across that miniature hedge of pink and green should have been a heartening thing, but to his surprise his smile met no response. Jill sent no answering message back to him as she was wont to do.

She talked vivaciously, thereafter. She radiated charm, the intangible fascination of a woman in a cozy home, the evident mistress of housewifely arts. The man from the office enjoyed himself and envied Jack. He little knew the trouble he had brewed. Jack sensed it. And Jill?

Her laughter, her obligation to make small talk while the awakening suspicion of jealousy was gnawing at her heart, were winds that fanned a blaze. Under cover of light words, her thoughts went—gropingly at first, then racing madly—along the path that Jack's mother, Kitty, De Maupassant, Jack himself, had laid. You may or

you may not know how these conflagrations sweep a woman's mind.

At a late hour, the visitor went his way. They sped his parting from the open door. He looked back at that picture of Jill standing in the shelter of Jack's arm—he had laid it lightly across her shoulder in a permissible caress—the mellow light from the room behind them streaming out into the night.

"Night!" he called, raising his hat, and to himself thought, "Lucky fellow, Jack!"

Jill moved from the caressing arm as the door closed. Jack snapped the latch and turned for a more fervid embrace, in which he thought the trouble might be solved. But Jill was in the other room by then, busy with cups and saucers, gathering up the coffee spoons. She had let the little colored girl who waited at table go home, meaning to wash the fragile china herself. She was very careful of her wedding presents, was Jill.

"Pretty nice evening!" said Jack, as he followed her. "The dinner couldn't have been better, little girl!"

"I'm very glad," said Jill. She didn't raise her eyes, and her tone was—oh, so cold!

Jack reached for a slice of cake that was left upon the plate, and ate it with his head held back so as not to spill the crumbs.

"I could have eaten that piece at dinner," he said, in guileful praise.

"Why didn't you?" asked Jill.

She moved farther around the table. The low-hanging light dome was a wall between her and Jack.

"Now, look here, Jill—what's wrong?"

He strode around the table and took her in his arms, though she held herself a stiff, unyielding little figure.

"Nothing." She turned her head aside from the inevitable kiss, but Jack was too strong. He brushed his lips



across her hair, he caught her face between his hands and turned it up to him. Jill's lashes swept her cheeks, but she could not get away.

"Now stop this foolishness! I want to know what's wrong!"

A tear gleamed among the lashes.

"Why, Jill!" he cried and kissed her on the lips.

It was a compelling kiss that burned, and Jill gave way. Her arms flashed up and around his neck; her head burrowed desperately in the hollow of his shoulder as she clung to him—tightly—urging her possession.

"I—I— Oh, Jack! That horrid girl!"

"What girl?"

"Down—down at that store! The one who tried to flirt with you——"

"Good Lord!" said Jack, utterly amazed. "Why, honey—all that foolishness of Red's——"

"Oh, but I know those girls go on that way with men—and you—you have got lovely eyes! I guess they'd be only too glad—— And I know men get tired of their wives sometimes——"

Jack shook her as if she'd been a naughty child, and she enjoyed a new sensation.

"Of all the rot! Why, Jill—you're the only woman in the world!" said Jack, and the recording angel nibbled at his pen. A man among men, the recording angel is merciful at times.

The worst seemed over then. Jack's methods of persuasion were successful, and Jill had wanted most of all to be reassured.

She was drifting off to sleep, consoled and happy, when the last word pricked her tongue.

"But, Jack—some men—do flirt—with those—girls," she said.

No storm that passes but leaves its mark behind—a broken branch, a flower in the dust, a straw blown from a nest.

Having thus tasted jealousy, Jill could never again know perfect peace

—she thought. Her honeymoon was behind her. She hearkened now to Kitty's fears and digested them. She looked at Jack with a question in her eye. He was no longer that invulnerable lover; he was also a man, and men were fickle, sometimes strayed——

"It's so unfair," Kitty told her one day. "We stay at home—they go downtown, meet new people all day long." Kitty looked upon a man's business life as one everlasting social tea. "If we go out much, we're gadabouts. I know! Walt's people think it's dreadful because I don't keep house. No, sir! Have to stay at home and grow dumpy and uninteresting, while Walt stays just what he's always been? I think I see myself! No housekeeping for me! I told Walt that. Of course—if there were children"—she examined one finger nail with exaggerated solicitude—"of course that would be different." There was an unmistakable quiver about her lips.

"You think—you'd—like having children, Kitty?" asked Jill. She was a trifle embarrassed and lowered her voice, though Kitty was not and did not.

"I'd love it!" said Kitty, in a fierce little voice that was like an ache among her other words. But the next moment she laughed flippantly again. "And it'd be another hold on Walt. All men are crazy about children, Jill, don't you know they are? Did I tell you there was a new stenographer in Walt's office, and the men all call her 'Cutie'? One of them let it out the other night."

With Jill in the frame of mind to which all of this brought her, it was a trick of fate that sent her down upon Canal Street that Saturday afternoon—and Kitty with her. They bought shoes and went to a picture show. Then Kitty remembered that she wanted some hairpins, and in front of the store they met Jack. He was off early—just going home, he said.



Jack's face was crimson. He seemed, to Jill, to laugh in a guilty way.

"Well, come in here," Jill said. "We'll only be a minute."

So in they went. The notion counter was the last one in the store. The intervening aisles were crowded, and Jack, towering in that crowd, was separated more than once from Jill. They were so separated when Jill looked back at him with a laughing word upon her lips and saw that his eyes went past her, unconscious that she looked. She

saw him raise his hat, and her glance darted in the direction of his—and she saw the girl.

The girl was, of course, behind the handkerchief counter. She was striking looking even in her uniformlike garb of black. Her hair was combed with a skill that Jill herself could not acquire. There was a glorious color in her cheeks, a patrician arch to the brows above the delicate nose. And

she was looking straight at Jack when Jill saw her, and her lips were parted over gleaming teeth. Jill read the motion of those lips. The girl was saying, "Hello, kid!"

Jill was paralyzed with the unexpected horror of the thing. The crowd jostled her on, and she lost sight of the girl. Jack's face was maddeningly innocent when she caught his eye. He didn't know she'd seen him flirting with that girl! No question of suspicion, this. What she had seen she had seen.

Of course Jack wasn't flirting. He explained that for the dozenth time an hour later, when Jill faced him, tragic-eyed, accusing.

It was just circumstances—the way things looked. Couldn't Jill see that? Jill couldn't.

He'd simply lifted his hat to a girl who'd spoken to him. He had to speak—common politeness—

"'Common' it certainly was!" Jill spurned the word as if it had been some vile, branding thing. "With all those people looking on! I was so mortified! They must have known I was with you! I used to think—when they told me men flirted with those girls—I used to be proud to think you'd never fall so low!" Thus melodramatically the thing magnified itself to Jill.

"I wasn't flirting, I tell you, Jill. Maybe it looked that way to you. I guess it did. Oh, hang it, what's the use of talking? I'd never think a thing like that about you."

"You'd never have the chance! Things never even look suspicious where I'm concerned. And Kitty saw you, too!"

It was a painful scene and left a scar like those that flush at times in reminiscent crimson. Jill was beset by haunting fears of she knew not what. That Jack should be like other men—should flirt with girls! Jill was no snob. The fact that the girl was behind a counter was not against her in

Jill's eyes. It was simply that she was young and attractive, too ready with her smiles, and Jack was possessed of that emotional quicksilver in his veins that is the heritage of man.

Why had he been in front of just that store when they had met him? Perhaps he had been going in to see the girl. Perhaps he went there other times. Perhaps—

Jill couldn't let the matter lie. To think that Jack had tired of her so soon! She'd never have believed it if she hadn't seen it with her own eyes.

Thus did Jack fall from the pedestal where Jill had thought him fixed "as long as ye both shall live." He became weary of ineffectual denial, as the days went by and Jill continued to look at him in that reproachful way. Nothing could convince her that Jack hadn't flirted with that girl and wasn't in the habit of doing it. So Jack ceased to try.

The honeymoon seemed, in truth, a thing of the past. The little dinner parties Jill had loved to give were memories of it. It grew tiresome, pretending for the benefit of outsiders and relatives that all was well between Jack and her. The look of commiserating understanding in Kitty's eyes enraged Jill. She wondered how many people Kitty had told of that Saturday afternoon. She didn't ask Kitty to lunch as often as she used to ask her.

It was when things were at this stage—just ripe for trouble, as the saying is—that Don Pavlo phoned one afternoon. Don Pavlo was a man Jill "used to know" before she'd married Jack. He was a romantic rolling stone of an erstwhile engineer, whose gypsy heart had taken him on trails through wild, romantic lands. In one of those lands, the natives had given him the name Jill called him by. The soft syllables appealed, and then—a nickname is a friendly thing.

When Don Pavlo phoned that he

was in town for two days, then off to Central America again, and might he come up to call?—he'd something he wanted Jill to put in her new house—he was asked to dine the evening of the second day.

Jack was not keenly interested. He had never cared particularly for Don Pavlo. It was not to be expected that he would.

But undeniably Jill felt a reawakening interest in life. She planned the dinner with great care. She put a big brass bowl of daisies in the living room and a basket of them in the middle of the dining table, and studied the arrangement with more interest than she had shown in many a day. Jill was in love with Jack, of course, you understand, but there are memories, certain little thrills, that any girl may with propriety entertain—and feel herself a pauper if she hasn't them.

There was a noticeable disappointment in Jill's voice when she phoned Jack at noon and told him, among other things, that Don Pavlo wasn't coming, after all. He'd phoned her. There was a man he had to see and could see only at an inconvenient hour. Yes—she was sorry, too.

Jack hung up the receiver with a murderous feeling for the ubiquitous Don Pavlo. Why should the fact that Jill wasn't going to see that man affect her so? The specter of divorce rose in Jack's mind. He had harbored the mad idea in the weeks gone by that Jill was sorry she had married him. If she wanted to be free—Of course he had been at fault—that is, Jill said he had—He was a brute—though he'd be hanged if he knew how, or why! Suppose she'd found she cared about this other man—

The thought of Jill rose often between Jack and his work that August afternoon. Under the current of the office noises—the clicking typewriters, the scratching pens, the whirl of an

electric fan—he heard Jill's voice with that faint quiver in its tones: "Yes—I'm sorry, too!" Between his eyes and the figures he traced upon the ledger page, there drifted a picture of Jill, sitting alone at home, hands idle in her lap, eyes and lips wistful—a pathetic little figure, sitting alone at home while he was out in the world among men. There must be something he could do to make her happy as she used to be, to clear away the ridiculous misunderstanding, to make her see that circumstances were alone to blame. Jill couldn't be expected to understand such misleading circumstances. That was a man's province—the sorry scheme of things entire—Jack was reduced to quoting Omar Khayyám at this stage.

An hour earlier than usual, he slammed the ledger shut, determination kindling in his eye. He was going home to Jill. He would take matters into his own hands and make her know how much he cared. They'd settle that for once and all—though what there was for him to say on the subject that he hadn't already said, the good Lord only knew. They'd celebrate—go out to dinner. He went out of his way for a box of her favorite roses before he caught his car.

That car moved very slowly. The run that, as a general thing, was made in twenty minutes consumed a full half hour. They must stop at every corner, trail for a block behind another car, be delayed at a railroad crossing for a full five minutes or more. Jack scowled impatiently, snapped open his watch.

After he left the car, there was some distance to walk. His steps seemed clogged, as those of one who hurries in a nightmare. He couldn't get home soon enough to Jill, whom he pictured sitting there in the living room, darning his socks, maybe—a modern Penelope.

Jack sprang up the steps, crossed the



He went out of his way for a box of her favorite roses before he caught his car.

gallery in two giant strides, flung open the unlatched door. His eyes were alight with eagerness; there was a conquering tenderness in his smile that he hoped would take the place of words. He was prepared for sight of Jill sitting there alone—

Well, Jill sat there—but not alone.

Don Pavlo faced her, leaning forward in his chair, his dark, romantic face alight with the interest that only a pretty woman can awake. His thin lips smiled in quizzical enjoyment of what she had to say; his eyes appreciated fully the picture that she made.

Lonely? Crying? She?

She sat in her favorite big wicker chair and leaned toward Don Pavlo as he leaned toward her. There was a subtle intimacy in the little tea table at her side, which flaunted her very best tea set of pale-green china, her teakettle of shining brass. Jill's eyes were sparkling; her lips and cheeks flew traitorous signs of her enjoyment of the party.

"It's perfectly fascinating—just to hear you talk!" she cried as Jack opened the door.

Then she saw him, and the crimson tide that swept over her face carried with it an expression of embarrassment that would have made her fortune in the films. She couldn't have shown it deliberately if she had tried. Only a constitutional *jeune fille* could have looked just so.

Don Pavlo smiled a cheerful greeting—the greeting of overemphatic comradeship that every villain has for the unex-

pectedly returning husband, so Jack thought. He seemed to protest by his manner that his call was a most conventional thing. But he looked the villain's part, with his amorous black eyes and his too winning smile.

Jack understood the fellow. His own face was rigid, his voice rang loud in his ears.

"Hello, Carey! You're looking fit," he said. He was hardly conscious of the words, but instinct served him.

Picture the situation then: Jill stricken dumb—she read Jack's face; did Jill; Jack suavely courteous, a



smile upon his mask, behind which emotions raged; Don Pavlo hiding under the cloak of conventionality.

Banalities whirled around them. Don Pavlo daringly delayed his going, now that Jack was come. It was the thing to do, you might have said, but Jack knew it for "that fellow's nerve." Jill's hostess smile stiffened upon her face. Jack commented most politely upon the little bronze god Don Pavlo had brought Jill. The box of roses, with the evening paper atop, were thrown carelessly upon a chair.

Surely, but slowly the clock ticked on, and finally Don Pavlo left. With devilish exuberance he wrung Jack's hand, assured him he certainly had been glad he'd seen him—would see him again before too many years were past! Jack's fury rose with each soft-spoken word. Unseen, he eased his collar just a bit.

And, as a last inspired touch in parting, Don Pavlo kissed Jill's hand, kissed it with a Mephistophelean grace that made Jack long to throw him down the steps. And then he went.

Behind, he left a stricken pair.

Jack's fury froze to scorn. He looked at Jill with a stern, accusing eye that crippled speech.

Jill looked at Jack, and words died on her lips—the few that got that far. She was furious with Jack, she told herself, and yet—what must he think? It looked as if she'd lied to him about Don Pavlo's coming—as if she hadn't wanted him to be there when Don Pavlo came—

"He telephoned," she said at last, in most dignified, chilly tones, "just after you rang off at noon. He'd changed his plans and had an hour to spare, though he couldn't come to dinner. I tried to phone you to come home early, but the line was busy—"

From the bookcase behind her, the red binding of De Maupassant gleamed out at Jack like a winking, evil eye.

Jack said never a word, and Jill's tones quickened defiantly.

"I was so glad to see him!"

"So it seemed." Jack plunged to sarcasm at that. The atmosphere of tragedy thickened.

"And I'm wild about my little bronze god!" The situation grew blacker with every word they spoke.

But the stern realities of life heed not such clouds.

"I'll get dinner as soon as I can," said Jill. "It'll be rather late." She took a dozen steps through the dining room. "I can't understand at all why you're behaving this way. It's too absurd!" she said in sheer bravado. She'd realized the moment Jack had opened the door how very "queer" the tableau must seem to him.

Jack stood by a window and opened his paper with a sharp, crackling sound. He signified thus that he had nothing more to say. The darkest hour had come.

Then, with inevitable swiftness, came the dawn. Jill whirled, cast dignity to the winds, as every Jill is forced to do, and ran to Jack.

"Oh, Jack!" she cried, and held him tightly with both little hands. "Don't let's behave like this! It just gets worse and worse! I'm tired of being mad! I know it did look queer—I'm so tangled up in what things look like and what they really are! It wasn't my fault to-day, any more—than it was yours that Saturday in the store." A diplomat was Jill. "And, oh, I wish I'd never seen that man!"

That was her last intelligible word. Jack's dignity caved in. He was not proof against those clinging hands and the sobs that bowed Jill's head upon his breast. He comforted her—and incidentally himself—as any other husband would have done.

Shadows that had no terror for Jill when Jack was by crept out of the corners of the room and blurred the reali-

ties of bookcase and table and chairs to a happy "lovers' land of making up."

"And, Jack—I'm ashamed of the way I behaved since that other time—that day down in the store! I know that wasn't your fault," whispered Jill. She reveled in repentance now that she had tasted it; she racked her brain for mean things that she had done or that Jack had left undone.

Jack met her on her own ground.

"I'm ashamed of myself. I ought to be kicked for the way I behaved just now, honey. It was the way things looked that got me going, too, and that fellow ought to have had more sense than to do a thing like that!"

Upon Don Pavlo's broad shoulders they heaped the blame.

Thus from the bottom of the hill they mended their fall. For if Jack had toppled from his pedestal when Jill had thought him guilty of flirting with "that girl," why, so had Jill toppled

from hers in that one wild moment when Jack had opened the door and had seen her leaning toward Don Pavlo. He'd thought himself deceived and tricked—laughed at, perhaps.

Jill held her roses in her arms. Their fragrance drifted out into the shadowed room. Her fingers tightened spasmodically, now and then, in Jack's big palm.

Out of a happy silence, her laugh rang, softly clear.

"Oh, Jack! There's no dinner, hardly—just salad and dessert! And it's getting awfully late. I was about to start it when he came——"

"Dinner! We're going out to dinner. That's why I came home early. Get your hat while I lock up."

When she went, a snatch of song upon her lips, he heaved a sigh of great content.

It was so good to feel that he and Jill, once more, were on a plane.



### AN HONEST CONFESSION

**A**N honest confession may be good for one's own soul, but it is not always good for others.

The teacher of the "steamer class" in the Boston public schools, in which were gathered the newly arrived immigrant children from every quarter of the globe, had been trying to instill a conception of truth into the minds of her variegated brood.

Thursday morning, when it was demanded of Incoronata why she was late, the little Italian maid stood up boldly and said:

"I play, lady teescher."

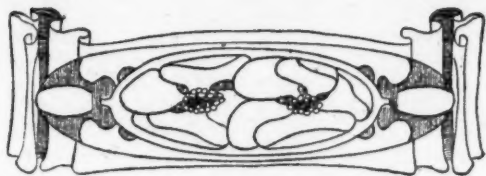
The other pupils opened their eyes in horror, expecting to see Incoronata chastised terribly. The teacher saw her chance. She launched upon a eulogy of truth, and praised Incoronata for her brave confession and her loyalty to truth. Before she had finished, from being the cringing culprit in the eye of the school, Incoronata was the envied heroine of every little foreigner, hungry for the love and approval of the beautiful "lady teescher."

Next morning, when the bell rang, not a pupil was in the room. The teacher waited five, ten, twenty minutes, and was just ready to start to investigate what catastrophe had swept the foreign quarters when in trooped the school. She rapped for order, and demanded sternly:

"Children, what does this mean?"

Simultaneously every hand went up. Simultaneously, in eager, foreign accent, every pupil shouted:

"I play, lady teescher!"



# Buying at Home

By Emily Newell Blair

WHEN Mrs. Smith of Perryville drives to the county seat to purchase her new carpet, the storekeeper at Perryville complains that Perryville women will no longer buy at home. When the county-seat woman goes to the near-by city to buy her new Wilton rug, her furniture-store man makes a like complaint. When the city woman goes to the metropolis to select a real Chinese rug, the city shopkeeper joins the refrain. Thus it goes, and in every burg, county seat, and city we hear the wail that the parcels post and the two-cent railroad fare have ruined business for the merchant; in each of these towns a Booster Club, or a Commercial Club, or a Business Men's League appeals loudly to local loyalty, while local newspapers devote many inches of editorial space to a plea for the patronage of home markets.

It seems queer that the most progressive business men in the whole world should insist so vociferously on static customers. It seems stranger that men so awake to every opportunity should mourn the exchange of one old customer for two new ones. The Perryville merchant who has lost the trade of Mrs. Smith, since she purchased an automobile that will take her to the county seat, now receives that of two Mrs. Browns, who buy at his store what

their mothers "made on the farm" or went without. In the county seat, two other Mrs. Smiths from near-by villages motor in to take the place made vacant by Mrs. White, when she goes to the city to join other Mrs. Whites from other county seats, and to replace Mrs. Vandeventer, who has just "left for a shopping trip to New York."

The number of the Perryville merchant's customers has not diminished any more than has that of the county-seat merchant or that of the city merchant. This is proven by the increase in bank clearings in all of these places, and by the fact that each of these merchants is handling a larger stock and turning it more often than did his predecessor of thirty years ago.

The small town, to-day, is not losing trade; it is merely exchanging one "trade" for another. What is happening is that each town is the center of a different circle. Where once it drew all the buyers from a certain territory, now it draws a certain group from a much larger territory. In other words, a commercial center is no longer supported by its nearest inhabitants, but by scattered groups from a much larger district.

While this undoubtedly makes for a more complex society, it does not necessarily make for a less satisfactory so-

ciety. The buyers bring back to their home towns more than their purchases; they bring back ideas acquired in their buying centers; they learn to think in terms of a larger territory and of larger needs than those of one small community.

Mr. Brown of Perryville and Mr. Brown of Maryville meet at the long dinner table of the Commercial House; a discussion of good roads follows, and each man gets a better idea of the county's needs along that line. In the lobby of a St. Louis hotel, Mr. White of Springfield meets Mr. White of Hannibal; State politics are mentioned, and experiences with the public-utilities commission exchanged that give that body a new meaning to each man, who had, before, been thinking only of its relation to the industries in his own part of the State. At the Waldorf bar, Mr. Jones of Oshkosh meets Mr. Jones of Atlanta, and understands what the cotton crop means to the South, and the intricacies of the negro problem, as he never did before.

In time these men lose their provincialism. And as a result of the influence they exert "back home" on their return, and of the efforts of the local merchant to understand his new "outside" customers, the small town forgets its old self-sufficiency. Just as each community thus broadens out, so will the nation unify until it will be no longer a federation of small units, but one people, seeing the interaction and interdependence of each section on all the others, feeling the needs of the many as paramount to that of a few, thinking not as Perryvilleites, or even as Missourians, but as Americans. There is even a hope that the nation itself—through this process of sending buyers into world markets—may broaden until we shall drop the uncon-

plimentary adjectives with which we now prefix the word "foreigner" and dream once more of the Federation of the World.

Sometimes it would seem that we Americans will never learn that results spring from causes, and that causes bring inevitable results. We note a certain situation. It is a change from the old order and has its inconveniences. Without seeking the causes and recognizing that they cannot be changed, we try by purely artificial means to alter the situation; without inquiring carefully whether the change tends, we seek to stop it by legislation. So it is with this change in our buying habits. The clubs aforesaid try to stop this change by appeals. As well might they try to stop a glacier by mere words. As long as people can buy more profitably in larger centers and can afford to go where there is a wider choice, they will continue to go. No amount of argument will stop them.

How much better if these same clubs and newspapers, realizing the impossibility of doing away with increased facilities for travel, parcels post, and the human nature that will buy as cheaply and secure as wide a choice as possible, would recognize that their community, too, may profit from this situation; would urge their merchants to satisfy the new customers instead of trying to force the old customers into remaining with them; would do their utmost to break down old barriers between their territory and their town, instead of shouting that it is a people's duty to buy from them just because they live within a mile of the town.

In doing this selfishly, they would be benefiting the community in ways they wot not of, by hastening the new day of a closer national and international understanding.

# As a Man Sows

By Stella M. During

Author of "The Crooked Stick," "The End of the Rainbow," etc.

ILLUSTRATED BY EDMUND FREDERICKS

**Memories of a past that will not die, and a haunting fear that finally takes physical form and becomes real and menacing. A tense, dramatic, thrilling novel of England and India.**

## CHAPTER I.

SAHIB, I sorry. No dinner."

Graham Carr pushed his toupee back from his damp forehead and stared at his Indian servant. He had had an exhausting day; he was wet through with perspiration and the damp droppings from jungle leaves; he was hungry to the point of nausea—and there was no dinner.

"Good Lord! How's that?" he demanded.

It had been a daily marvel to him, but "Sammy" had evolved a decent meal from somewhere always, up to now. Sammy shrugged a pair of thin shoulders under his white cotton jacket and spread a pair of appealing hands.

"Rice," he said, "an' curry. Soup! Stewed dry peach!" His master would not consider that a dinner and he knew it.

"Nothing else? No chicken?"

"Burman, he no sell," explained Sammy, profoundly apologetic.

"But, damn it all, we'd pay for it!"

"He no sell," Sammy repeated. "Engleeshman kill."

"Well, the silly fool doesn't think I should eat it unless it *was* killed, does he?"

"Burman, he no kill," explained Sammy with patience. "He no kill anything. He no eat chicken, only egg."

"And were they all alike? Wouldn't any of them sell you one?"

Nosir!" Sammy had been to England and was proud of it.

"Well! Why, I saw hundreds as I came in! Be hanged to them! If they won't sell you one, *steal* one!" he blazed, which was reprehensible in a deputy commissioner, even in a commissioner disappointed of his dinner.

He didn't really believe that Sammy would take him seriously—"Sammy" was as near as he could get to the fellow's outlandish name—though he saw the man's face clear as if a problem had been satisfactorily solved as he turned an impatient shoulder on him and strode through the dak bungalow into the tiny bathroom at the back. His bath was ready, steaming and hot, a filmy cotton shirt, a dry silk suit. Sammy really was a treasure.

Even the agonies of his first attack of prickly heat were less intolerable when, cooled and clothed and clean, he leaned back in a lounge chair on the veranda, a whisky and soda in one hand, a biscuit in the other, for dinner, Sammy had apologetically informed him, would to-night be a little late.

The swiftly falling tropical dark was rapidly blotting out the lovely landscape as he looked. Already his men had lighted a fire in the little clearing by the rest house across the track, and their chatter, high-pitched and light-hearted, as they moved about cooking rice for their evening meal, came up



to him not unpleasantly. As a rule, he was interested in listening, in picking out here and there a word he knew and trying to piece together their conversation, for his want of knowledge of the vernacular was an ever-present handicap in his work. But to-night the effort seemed beyond him. As a rule, he regarded with more than kindness the gentle, simple people among whom the best fifteen years of his life would inevitably be passed. But to-night he felt that he could not endure the thought of the long years to be spent among them, the recollection of their smooth, inscrutable Mongolian faces and their slanting, inscrutable Mongolian eyes was horrible to him. He loathed the soft, mysterious darkness that infolded him, filled, he knew, with range after range of lofty, tree-covered hills, musical with the murmur of great waters that flowed in the untrodden valleys, terrible with the death that might lurk, hidden and sinister, behind every shadow of the wood, under every stone of the hillside. He hated the thought of the march to-morrow, through interminable leagues of jungle, soul depressing in its dark gloom one minute, intoxicating in its unearthly beauty the next, a march in search of an enemy wily as the serpent, elusive as the proverbial eel.

He had been out after them now seven weeks, and so far he had not seen one of them. To be sure, no further complaints of dacoity in his district had reached him, and it was quite possible that, in view of the energetic methods he was taking for their suppression, the marauders had retired to safer quarters. But to-night even that fact failed to give him satisfaction. He detested the task he had undertaken; he could not understand how he had ever been fool enough to undertake it at all, deliberately to choose a career in life that would bury him for years in the steaming green depths of the

virgin forests of Burma, where for months at a time his only apology for a companion would be his Indian servant, Sammy, his only approach to conversation such as Sammy's limited vocabulary could supply.

Yet it had seemed such a chance to have a district of his own at twenty-four, to be a little king in a lush green kingdom, with the power of life and death in his hands and the fine British traditions of justice and fair dealing to uphold. He understood the glamour of the thing, but he loathed himself that he had yielded to it. Other men knew better; other men chose careers less distinguished, perhaps, but still careers that kept them in England, where skies were cool and life was pleasant and feminine companionship, in all its subtle sweetness, a matter of every day. Why had not he chosen a life like that? Why had he banished himself, buried himself alive like this, at twenty-four?

The cheerful clash of plate and glass and china on the table just behind him stopped his bitter questioning. His dinner was ready, and it included a chicken, cooked to a turn and a good deal plumper than most. He grinned a little as he saw it. Where had Sammy got it?

In the morning he knew. Every one in Burma rises while it is yet dark, since the glowing hours from ten to four in the day are spent in rest by both man and beast. The heavy mists of early morning, pearl gray with the coming light, still hung like a clammy blanket over everything, hiding track and rest house and all the world, when Carr came out on to the veranda of the dak bungalow equipped for his day's work. He could hear his pony, full of corn, shake and jingle reins and bit in sheer exuberance of spirit, but he could not trace even the outline of him through the fog that hid the track ten feet below. He could

hear his men, trim to the last button, chatting and laughing as they fell in not twenty paces away, but he could not see one of them. He shivered in his thin clothing; the clammy cold seemed to strike to his very marrow. He turned for the warming "peg," though he knew he would do better to go without it, but with his hand on the neck of the bottle he paused. A sudden hubbub had arisen below, a very babel of excited talking.

"What the deuce is up now?" he asked himself, and ran lightly down the bamboo ladder into the road.

A Burman was there, evidently an angry Burman. Carr's men were crowding about him, acutely interested and quite plainly sympathetic.

"Here!" said Carr sharply. "What does all this mean?"

The Burman shikhoed politely, putting his finger tips together, inclining his hands in Carr's direction, and bowing profoundly over them in the pretty and impressive salutation common to all. Carr saluted gravely in return—he was scrupulously responsive to every civility and his men appreciated it—and waited. Then the Burman poured out a long and moving tale of which Carr did not understand one single word.

"Sammy!" he shouted. "Sammy!" For without Sammy he could do nothing.

But Sammy did not come. Blindly Carr stared into the baffling fog, but there was no sign of him. His men did their best, with single words, simple sentences that he felt he should have understood—but did not. What a nuisance it was! Why had he wasted all those weeks playing tennis in Rangoon when he might have been learning the beastly language? Where was Sammy? What a *nuisance* it was, just when he wanted him most!

The fog was lifting. Already long,

pale beams of rose and lemon were shooting up in the radiant east like the sticks of a celestial fan. The mist swayed this way and that, floating upward here and there to the treetops, melting with incredible rapidity before the coming of the day. Something pink shone suddenly behind the gauze veil that yet hung across the track. The next moment the veil had blown away before a little wandering puff of wind and revealed a laughing group of Burmese girls.

Carr stared at them with genuine admiration; it was as if the jungle had suddenly broken into Brobdignagian flowers before his eyes. Their silken skirts and scarfs, in delicate shades of pink and lemon and apple green, their linen jackets of spotless white, the orange of their paper sunshades, each a lambent glory behind their daintily dressed heads, made a feast of color in the pearly dawnlight that he was quite artist enough to appreciate.

But of all the smiling maidens, it was the first, only, that he really saw; the first, whose long robe and chain of heavy, uncut rubies marked her superior social rank. With quick pleasure, his blue-gray eyes rested upon the picture she presented, a picture sweetly, shyly charming, from the lustrous coils of her blue-black hair to the little white-stockinged foot in its quaint wooden shoe. He thought of the leg-of-mutton sleeves, the wa-p waists, the absurd high-heeled slippers with their inevitable accompaniment of corn and bunion, that he had left in England a twelvemonth ago, and shuddered. Why could not all women, everywhere, dress daintily, sensibly, like this? Secure in the obscurity of his alien tongue, he spoke aloud:

"Well, you *are* a pretty girl!" he said.

She blushed as rosy red as the hibiscus blossom in her hair, and instead of the shikho he had expected, dropped

him as shy and simple a little curtsy as ever one met in a Surrey lane.

"Goodd morningg, sir," she said.

Carr's mouth dropped slightly open; in all his life he had never been quite so much surprised. But he recovered himself instantly, took his toupee in his hand, and walked up to her.

"You speak—English?"

"Yes. I have been educate'—at the mission school—in Mandalay."

Her manner was perfect. The Burmese maiden is never shy, but she is always modest, and the gentle, elusive dignity of this one Carr felt to his very soul. And she spoke English, an educated English. The temptation to keep her, to hear those pretty lips frame the words of his mother tongue, however imperfectly, was irresistible. He looked around apprehensively for Sammy; he did not want Sammy now.

There was no Sammy, and the aggrieved Burman was down on the ground shikhoing before the dainty newcomer, with what was nearer adoration than respect. The opportunity was too good to be lost.

"Then—if you would be good enough to help me? I'm in a very real difficulty. This man wishes to tell me something, and without my interpreter—"

The girl looked up at him, a smile lighting the sweet darkness of her eyes.

"Ohyes. I help my father somewhat—sometimes, I mean." And she turned to the aggrieved Burman, who stood up and told his long and moving tale again.

"It is—a chicken," she explained at last, with the puzzled gravity of a perplexed child. "He says your servant has taken—stolen—" She broke off, embarrassed, uncertain.

Carr blushed scarlet up to his hair. That fool of a Sammy!

"It is a mistake," he assured her, with most satisfactory decision. "I believe," for conscience constrained him,

"Sammy did steal—take it! But he—I meant to pay for it. We always pay for *everything*. Will you give him this? Do you think it will be—enough?"

He dropped two rupees into the hand she held out, a delicate little hand the color of old ivory, pretty even without the pink tinting on palm and finger tips that is in a European hand so great a charm. She looked down at the coins and up again at Carr.

"It is—too much," she said, and laughed merrily.

"I don't care—I mean it doesn't matter. Will you, *please*!"

She shrugged a dainty shoulder and complied. The Burman stared at the coins in his palm and then at Carr. Never, never in all his life, had he been paid two rupees for one small chicken before. He backed, clutching them and shikhoing again and again as well as he could with half the fingers of one hand shut hard down over them. Carr's amused eyes followed him and then came back to the dainty maiden at his side.

"Was it enough?" he asked.

"It was too much," said the girl, and laughed again.

The next moment she was gone, vanishing with her companions like a broken rainbow among the trees. But for Carr the little rencontre illumined the day. Her dainty prettiness, her sweet and simple dignity, the utter absence of coquetry and self-consciousness about her as she had helped him, a stranger of an alien race, through his little difficulty, woke him to earnest respect and ardent admiration. The very jungle ceased to be detestable. Even the sour-sweet smell of its rank vegetation, rotting and fermenting in the steamy heat, did not to-day make him sick. It had for him less danger and more beauty.

The end of the afternoon's march should have seen him fifteen miles

away from Maudoung. It found him back there at the same dak bungalow at which he had rested the night before. Sammy was nonplused. Neither heat nor frost, thunder nor rains, had ever been allowed to interfere with his master's projects before, yet here were all his plans drastically changed for, as far as Sammy could see, no reason whatever. For the reasons he gave, that his men were tired, that Maudoung was a good center at which to rest till further news of marauding reached him, were manifestly inadequate. A few words from his master after dinner cleared up the situation—for Sammy.

"Sammy," he asked, "who was the lady who helped me through this morning?"

Sammy's hand for a moment hung suspended, the napkin with which he was brushing away crumbs in it.

"Her father great Thu-gyi, sahib," he replied quietly. "He ver' rich man. Much elephant, much buffalo, much ruby—"

Carr turned on him.

"How do you know which lady I mean? You were not there!"

A little gleam shone for a moment from behind Sammy's lowered eyelids.



The temptation to keep her, to hear those pretty lips frame the words of his mother tongue, however imperfectly, was irresistible.

"Sahib, I hear," he said deprecatingly. "Uzzer men tell."

"Hear! You hear a good deal too much! What is her name? Did you hear that?"

"Ma Pan-byu."

The White Flower! The name was poetically appropriate. Carr's face softened as he let it sink into his mind.

"You're a rascal, Sammy," he remarked presently with grim apprecia-

tion. Something for a second lightened the gravity of Sammy's dark Eastern face. But one could not have said that he smiled.

And that was the beginning of it.

## CHAPTER II.

One hundred and four! Carr laid down the clinical thermometer he had just taken from his mouth as steadily as he could, but in spite of his care, it dropped from his shaking fingers and broke. It didn't matter. There was another in the medicine chest. It didn't matter anyhow, since to-morrow he would probably be too ill to use it. And the day after! Carr hardly looked to see the day after.

"Sammy," he said, controlling as well as he could his short and sharp breathing, "I'm—pegging—out."

Sammy stood looking down at him through the mosquito net. His dark face was as impassive as ever, but behind its impassivity lay a very real concern. He had seen attacks of fever before, but never one like this. Carr, too sure of his perfect and unshakable health, had been careless about the replenishing of his medicine chest. The proper remedies were wanting, and even if they had been there, Sammy was too ignorant and Carr too ill to have used them. And for want of them, he would die.

His men were standing about in clusters outside, silent and concerned. One of them had fetched the village doctor, who squatted on his hams in the dust, his astonishing collection of remedies spread out on a cloth in front of him. Bits of bone, boar's tusks, colored stones, little bottles with doubtful-looking contents—Sammy had looked them all over with silent disgust. He had more faith in the charms, of which there were a goodly number, but the fact that the sick man had no faith at all robbed them of efficacy. And with-

out doubt, if no help were forthcoming, the sick man was doomed. Sammy had come in from his silent interview with the turbaned quack in the compound, a desperate plan forming itself in his mind. At Carr's quiet recognition of the fact that his days were numbered, he put it into words.

"Sahib, I send for Ma Pan-byu," he said.

Carr did not answer. Sammy doubted if he had heard. He went silently out to the veranda and sent a swift runner up the jungle track.

Two hours later Ma Pan-byu, with a couple of handmaidens, was there. She had imbibed, among other things, some knowledge of nursing at the mission school in Mandalay, and her activities among the native women and children were many. The grave, indulgent, rather indolent Burman gentleman who was her father had raised no objection to her nursing the young commissioner, of whom, during the last three months, he had seen a good deal. He had raised no objection to anything his daughter chose to do since the day when, at twelve years old, she had announced her intention of going down to the mission school at Mandalay and being educated on the European plan. All the activities in life in Burma are in the hands of the women.

Ma Pan-byu gathered up the threads of existence, both inside and outside Carr's new bungalow, into her capable and energetic hold, and from the moment she assumed command of his sick room, he began to mend. Dimly he recognized his savior, but not for some days was he sufficiently recovered from his exhaustion to show his gratitude. At the end of a week, however, he turned his leaden head with an immense effort and softly kissed the gentle hand that held a cooling drink of some sort to his lips. The girl bent over him, all athrill.

"Who am I?" she asked.



"Ma Pan-byu." It was the softest of sighs, barely audible.

"Elleezabet," she corrected him gently. "They christen me at the mission Elleezabet'."

He lay with closed eyes, too worn out even to smile. But he was vaguely aware that he liked "Ma Pan-byu" better.

He was on the highroad to convalescence, lying all his languid length in a deck chair out in the veranda, clothed and in his right mind, before she left him, and to the end of his life he could never remember without a shudder the blackness of the day when she went. The desolation of his loneliness was illuminating.

He knew, now, why Mau-doung had seemed so excellent a center from which to administrate his new district, Mau-doung, which was not a center at all. He knew, now, why the advice and help of the indolent, easy-going, courteous Burman who was Ma Pan-byu's father had seemed so valuable, so almost indispensable, in the management and elucidation of the little problems that faced him every day. He knew, now, why he had been content to let slip more than one opportunity that had presented itself for a rapid trip back to Rangoon, a tiny taste of that world of Western life and manners that had meant all that made life worth living three short months ago. At last his eyes were opened, and he understood. Well, he asked himself fiercely, well, why not?

It would dispose of so many difficulties; it would render so much that now was detestable, even intolerable, not only endurable, but pleasant. And it would be of such immense, such immeasurable assistance to him in the carrying through of the task to which he had set his hand. The usefulness of it! That was the aspect of which, with unconscious selfishness, he was most aware. He would do it! He

would! He had elected that he would spend the best fifteen years of his life buried alive in the green depths of Upper Burma. Why should they not be successful and even happy years? There was, in those days, little that counted as society. It would be easy to avoid the few who counted, the feminine few. The men did not matter. The men would understand.

Yet it was difficult to believe that it was he himself who stood, a few days later, before the dark and courteous little gentleman who was Ma Pan-byu's father, asking, and asking humbly, for his daughter's hand in marriage. His reception nettled him. It was plain that neither Ma Pan-byu's father nor the two grave Burmese youths standing behind him, who were Ma Pan-byu's brothers, desired the honor of his alliance. The elder man offered his visitor one of the big black cigars that both he and his sons were smoking, indicated a silken cushion on which he might sit, and proceeded to explain his position.

With a shock of relief, a relief that surprised him, Carr gathered that there was to be no active opposition. Pan-byu, said her father, had shown from the first such a marked leaning toward Western ways and ideals that it was not surprising if she should choose an Englishman for her husband. It rested with Pan-byu. If Pan-byu were willing to trust herself to a man of alien race and strange faith, her family, though they would in no way facilitate, would in no way hinder. Her family's part in the matter—and his slow and deliberate tones took on a new gravity and a touch of menace—was to see that she was treated with the consideration and respect and honor that were her due from all men.

All of which Carr expressed himself not only willing, but anxious, to agree to. He spoke in the difficult alien tongue, of which even yet he had little

mastery, with an earnestness and a sincerity that satisfied even the two dark listening brothers, for the angry light died out from their watchful, narrowed eyes and they shook hands as he finished, accepting a European fashion of salute for which they had little taste. Send for Pan-byu, Carr entreated. Let Pan-byu herself decide. Whereupon, her father clapped his hands, and Pan-byu herself, a radiant little figure in her shimmering silks, came softly from an inner room and stood beside her lover, adoration blazing in her dark eyes, happiness infolding her as a garment. And as to her decision, no further doubt was possible.

That was a wonderful wedding journey. It lay in Carr's memory always like a page from "Lalla Rookh" or "The Arabian Nights" come to exquisite, palpitating life before his eyes, a page in which he, with his cool Anglo-Saxon temperament and prosaic English training, played the part of hero. For Pan-byu—who was, he discovered, a much better Christian than he himself—would be married nowhere but at the mission church in Mandalay, and her father, while he would not countenance so painful a departure from Burmese tradition by his presence, was determined that she should travel there in a fashion befitting her social station. So the two, bridegroom and bride, rode in howdahs on the backs of elephants; cushioned howdahs, curtained and hung with silver bells; howdahs that, while serving as seats by day, could be converted into sleeping tents by night. A retinue accompanied them that would have put to shame that of many a native prince, and swift runners went before to prepare their way.

In the glow and glory of the tropic evening, Carr would wander in the lovely jungle glades—his arm about the soft and yielding little figure at his side, lilies ten feet high on either hand, every bush a cascade of flowers, death

by snake bite lurking, perhaps, in every grass tuft—and wonder if it were all a dream. But the little "Elleezabet" at his side was very real, the gentle little Elleezabet—she insisted upon her "Christian" name—who was not always quite, quite sure of her golden future.

"You will not—regret? You will not—be ashamed?" she asked him more than once, and something of the agony of her fear thrilled in the whisper. "English people—they like not a dark wife. I shall be yellow always. All the *thanakker* in Burma would not make me white. Oh, you will not be sorry? You will not regret? If you regret—I die!"

And Carr would stop her pretty lips with kisses, to the dismay of attendants unused to outrageous Western ways, and assure her again and again of the depth of his love and the eternity of his constancy.

It was in Mandalay, during the few days' delay that his little bride to be pleaded for before the wedding, that he was first conscious of the "little pitted speck." As Pan-byu, she was altogether charming. As Elleezabet', she jarred. And never was he more conscious of it than on his wedding morning. For days before, those days that Elleezabet' had assured him were so absolutely necessary for her preparations, he had been aware of the existence of a secret, a secret that the good women at the mission house, who had managed, in educating Pan-byu, to superimpose new virtues without destroying the old, had shared with her. As he stood at the altar in the mission chapel awaiting, and ardently awaiting, his bride, it broke upon him like an icy wave.

For where was the dainty maiden, radiant in her pale and delicately tinted silks, that he knew and loved? He looked for her in vain. Her place was usurped by a vulgar travesty of the European fashion of the day. They

had taken the coils of lustrous blue-black hair from the top of Pan-byu's head, had disposed it madonnawise on either side of her face after a fashion that brought out cruelly its every Mongolian tint and line, and had crowned it with a cheap straw hat. Her dress was of white muslin, with monstrous sleeves and twitched-in waist, and in it the natural lines of her figure, untrammelled by the corsets that even Elleezabet's devotion found intolerable, looked shapeless and absurd. And—worst mistake of all—she hobbled up the aisle in the sharp-toed, high-heeled, ridiculous shoes detested of Carr's soul! Was this his little Pan-byu? This laughable oddity, shrieking of pretense, unreal to pain? With it by his side, Carr heard little of the service. It was in the bedroom at the mission house, the little, white European bedroom in which he and Pan-byu were for the first time privileged to be together, that his exasperation found words.

"And for goodness' sake get out of those ridiculous clothes and into the things that suit you!" he said sharply. "You look like——"

"A sweep on May day" was on his tongue, for the comparison was irresistible, but he had the decency to keep it there.

Pan-byu drew back as if he had struck her, little Pan-byu who had never in all her life been roughly spoken to before.

"I—I thought you would like it," she faltered.

"Like it!" echoed Carr, with a curt laugh. "Good God!"

But on the return journey, that wonderful Eastern dream journey back, things recovered themselves. The little bride had the intuition to discover that, while as Pan-byu she was beloved and acceptable to her lord, as Elleezabet, for some reason past her puzzled understanding, she was not. So be it. Pan-byu she would remain. She had

her reward. For six months little slender, dark-eyed Pan-byu was consciously, exquisitely, absolutely happy.

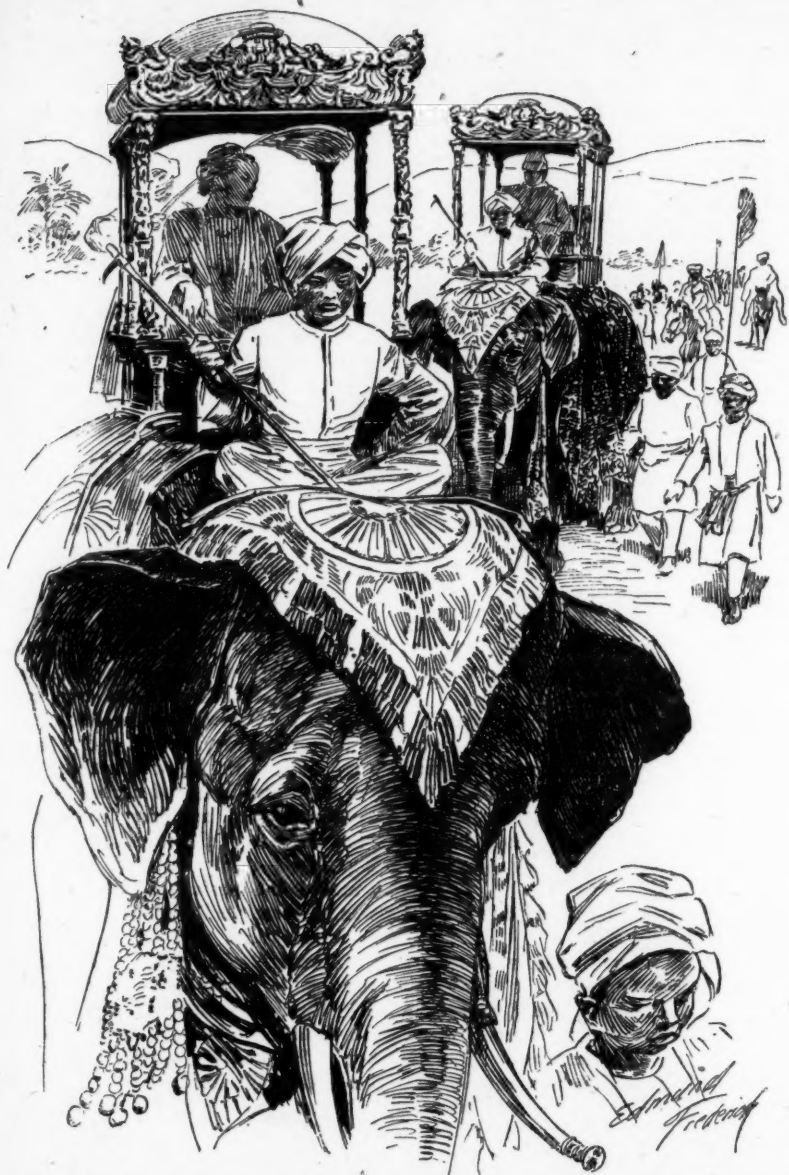
Not to many of us does life give so much. We have our periods of tranquillity and content. Days, single days, stand out in our memories marked with a white stone, days on which we were actively, undeniably, consciously happy. But six solid months of happiness!

If it were Pan-byu's share, all to which she was entitled, she was more fortunate than some of her sisters, for at least she had it. Carr worshiped the wife he had chosen, the gentle, courteous Burmese maiden who seemed to have all the virtues of the women of his own land and others peculiarly her own on the top of them. She had her full share of the genius for management possessed by the women of her race; her advice was indispensable to him, her help invaluable. For those six months, little Pan-byu, to all intents and purposes, was her most gracious Majesty Queen Victoria's deputy commissioner at Mau-doung in Upper Burma—and little Pan-byu was quite aware of it. And then the crash came.

It was a gray, steaming day at the very height of the wet season when the clash and tinkle of horses' bits, the steady thud of marching feet turning in at the gate of the stockade surrounding Carr's newly finished house, announced the arrival of visitors. He was at home perforce, and hurried out to receive them.

"Forster!" he said. "Downing!" shaking hands cordially with first one and then the other of two dripping Englishmen. "Well, I am glad to see you! How in the world did you get here—through this?"

"'Pon my word, I really don't know!" returned the younger of the two, laughing. "We've been in danger of sliding to kingdom come half a dozen times this beastly day!"



144 So the two, bridegroom and bride, rode in howdahs on the backs of elephants; and a retinue accompanied them that would have put to shame that of many a native prince.

But Carr was calling, "Elizabeth! Elizabeth!" though what made him use her "Christian" name he did not know.

"For Heaven's sake, Carr, let us get clean and decent before you present us to a lady!" protested Forster, glancing at the little pools of water dripping from his soaking suit; and Carr laughed and took them to the ever-ready bathroom, put his wardrobe at their disposal, and told them that dinner would be ready as soon as they were.

It was. His new house was a charming combination of native and European comfort. It stood on stout posts ten feet high, after the fashion of all Burmese houses; its roof was of thatch and its walls of matting. The richly colored silken hangings and cushions beloved of the Burmese soul made beautiful the interior, but there was also a dining table and chairs to sit upon. Soft-footed servants in spotless linen suits were bringing in a most appetizing meal as the two strangers, dry and clean and comfortable, came back into the open dining room.

And with it came Pan-byu. Carr saw Downing, the younger of his friends, stare, and behind his stare lay a little devil of laughter. He saw Forster's eyes blaze with sudden anger and his mouth set in a firm, straight line across his face. He took Pan-byu's hand and led her forward.

"My wife," he said with quiet emphasis.

Forster recovered himself instantly, shaking hands with his hostess and discussing the weather exactly as he would have done in England. Downing said, "The devil!" under his breath, and Carr heard him.

"I have letters for you," said Forster rather shortly, as they took their seats. "I wouldn't read them yet if I were you," and he handed him a little packet done up in the oiled silk that in Burma is indispensable.

Carr took them out, three or four,

one in a long envelope bearing the government stamp, and pondered. Forster had glanced at Pan-byu as he spoke, and his glance had held compassion. And why, Carr asked himself with a sort of dull anger, why should any one pity Pan-byu?

A little later he knew. For one of his letters, the one with the government stamp, was the offer of a post, more desirable and much better paid, in Malabar.

"You'll take it, of course," said Forster, his eyes on Carr's moody, thoughtful face. "You'd be a fool if you didn't. It means a trip home first. Any sane man would take it just for that. And it isn't only that, as you very well know. It's promotion, recognition, all that we poor devils out here covet most. You've Mrs. Featherstone to thank for it, of course. It's well to have a pretty woman to pull the strings."

Carr flushed scarlet. He had by no means forgotten the lively lady, some ten years his senior, with whom he had—well, a little more than flirted the summer before he came out.

"She has influence, you know," Forster remarked.

"She must have," agreed Carr a little grimly, "to do this."

"And she's there," Forster went on, driving his points home.

"Where?" asked Carr sharply.

"At Avengepooram. Not ten miles from where you'll be if you take it—which of course you will. You see she hasn't heard of your marriage. You've kept it a bit quiet. It isn't even known in Rangoon."

Carr said nothing. He had not intentionally kept it quiet. There had seemed no necessity to mention it; that was all.

"You'll find it, I'm afraid, a bit of a handicap. I'm sorry—but I can't help saying it."



Carr's face blackened. Why need Forster put into words what he was feeling in every fiber of his body and soul? Pan-byu in India? Impossible! Therefore there was one thing to be done and only one—to stay with Pan-byu here. But it was difficult to do it.

"Who'd go on here if I lit out?" he objected. "Who'd carry out my plans, keep on with all that I've begun?" But the objection was half-hearted and Forster knew it.

"Downing would," he said. "He's here on purpose. I've not come up through this for nothing, either. I'm sending my little Hilary back home. This is no climate for a kid, and she's got to be educated. She"—his face quivered painfully a moment—"she lost her mother, you know. I was going to ask you if you'd look after her—for old sake's sake. A youngster of seven is rather a nuisance and a bit of a responsibility, but she'll have her nurse with her, and I thought—I hoped—perhaps you wouldn't mind if—"

"Then does it mean going—at *once*?" Carr's lips paled a little as he spoke.

"Right now," returned Forster crisply. "Get back to Rangoon your quickest, cable your acceptance, and start by the first boat. If you're accepting, that is, of course."

And he would be a fool, the very triple extract of a fool, if he did not. Carr did not need Forster to tell him that. Again and again that afternoon, he fought his way through his perplexities, only to find himself in the end "up against" the greatest of them all—Pan-byu: Pan-byu in India! A "native" wife—in India! The handicap of it! The hindrance she would be to him—in every way! It would mean social ostracism! It would mean—Damn it all, there was only one thing to do, and that was to stay where he was and not go to India at all!

Yet the wet blackness of the early

morning found him softly moving about putting together what he would need for his journey. He had talked the night through to little Pan-byu, lying cold and still in his arms, and in the wet blackness of that early morning, she sat on the bedside watching him as he moved about, her dark eyes caverns of despair. Carr glanced at her every now and then with a kind of sick irritation. He had said all he could think of to say, he had made every promise it was possible to make. What more could he do? If she could still look like that— Suddenly she rose and flung herself into his arms.

"You—go!" she wailed, her hands about his neck, her face crushed into the curve of his arm. "Oh, do not, do not go—and leave me! If you go, take me also! I will not trouble you! I travel through the rain, oh, many, many time! I can go—long with you!"

"Sweetheart, you *can't*!" Carr spoke with a patience he felt was to be admired. "I must push on—go quickly, quicker than you *could*. Darling, you must stay behind a little while, only a little while. As God is above us, I'll send for you when the rains are over, when I'm settled again."

She looked up gasping.

"Graham, if you leave me—I die!"

"Nonsense, Pan-byu," in sharp remonstrance. "It isn't as if I were going forever! You're coming after me—very soon. It's only for a little while."

It had to content her. She watched him, from the veranda, ride into the drumming rain, with Forster by his side and their escort of native police splashing after them. He turned and kissed his hand to her again and again. Then the steaming gray curtain of the rain fell behind them and hid him from her anguished eyes.

And that, for poor little Pan-byu, was the end.

## CHAPTER III.

"Good to be home again, eh?"

Carr smiled sleepily as he lay full length on the tiny beach of warm red gravel beside a noisy little stream. Parminter, his friend, was busy with rod and line, but Carr was too lazy even to fish. The cool sunlight of an English spring filtered down upon him through a haze of delicate leaves. Primroses in thousands starred the mossy banks. It was good, oh, it was good to have left the last fifteen arid, scorching years behind him and to be home in England again! Parminter stood up; he had waders on, and about the lithe top of his rod danced a group of tiny glittering flies.

"I'm going farther down," he announced. "If I'm anywhere near you, we'll talk."

Carr nodded, entirely acquiescent. He did not want to talk; he wanted to think, to plan and arrange the life before him, for at forty he was still a young man. He had been blessed with a sound constitution; he had lived carefully, almost abstemiously; and the climate of southern India is less trying than that of the north. It had bronzed his face and grizzled his hair, but his health was still perfect, and there was not an ounce of superfluous flesh on all his wiry body.

He had come home feeling that the better part of his life, in more senses than one, was before him. An unexpected legacy had rendered his circumstances easy, if not affluent. Life as he had known and loved it as a boy, the only life he cared for—that of an English country gentleman—was at last possible. He would accept it gladly, gratefully; he would live the sane, normal, happy life of sane, normal, happy men; he would marry and settle down.

And for a Cumberland man, there is only one place in which to settle and that is in Cumberland. He had

been fortunate enough to find a house large enough for his requirements and small enough for comfort, among those who remembered him as a boy and had known his father and grandfather before him.

The next thing he wanted was a wife—a wife whom he could worship, for the tepid affection most men nearing forty are contented to feel for their spouses would not content him. He thirsted for emotional experiences, for, he told himself, with an odd sense of having been cheated out of his just rights, so far he had had none. There had been a tragic mistake in Burma, of which, now, he very seldom thought. A certain lurid episode had followed it of which he was now very bitterly ashamed. But of love in its best and highest form he knew nothing. Surely it would come to him among the mighty hills, the lovely dales, of Cumberland. He waited for it, consciously expectant and all athrill.

It came to him suddenly, as does always the great passion of a man's life. As he tramped along the valley road to the inn where Parminter's trout could be broiled for their luncheon, he saw two ladies sitting on the low stone wall of a tiny rustic bridge just ahead. There was something very charming to Carr, even at a distance, about their white skirts and shady hats. One of them had a crimson parasol like a big poppy on her shoulder, a parasol that sent little ruby lights running all over her. To his delight, Parminter walked up to them.

"Well," he said cordially, "this is luck! May I introduce my friend, Graham Carr, Miss Trent, Miss Forster?"

But Carr never even saw Miss Trent; his eyes were entirely occupied with the girl with the crimson parasol. For there was a warm glow in her cheeks for which that becoming sunshade was not altogether responsible, a smile in the hazel eyes looking up at him from

under their dark lashes that was subtly, strangely familiar.

"Forgive my impertinence, but does your Christian name happen to be Hilary?" he asked.

"Then it really is you," she returned warmly, shaking hands with him. "I thought I couldn't be mistaken, even though——"

"I am fifteen years older?"

"If you are, so am I," Hilary reminded him, laughing.

"Hello!" put in Parminter, much interested. "Old friends?"

"Very," returned Carr. "We came back from Burma together once, didn't we, Hil—Miss Forster?"

"Oh, please!" remonstrated Hilary.

"And I, for one, very much enjoyed the experience," he added.

"So did I," the girl told him frankly. "I've had a warm corner in my heart for you ever since. No one ever made a more delightful bear than you did; no one ever could growl half so realistically as you could. Do you remember how we used to carry off the deck chairs to make tents, and how angry Mrs. Tunnicliffe got about it? She used to tell you how disgracefully you spoiled me. Don't you remember?"

"Not the bear part of it. I remember slapping you because you would play at the head of the companionway, and I was afraid you would tumble down it. I wonder you can overlook that."

"Oh, I don't think a child ever regrets a justifiable slapping—and I'm sure if you did slap me, I thoroughly deserved it. You will come and see us when we get back to London, won't you, Mr. Carr?"

"London! You live in London!"

"Yes, as a rule. My cousin Dorothy," laying her hand on the other girl's arm, "is a singer. The doctor ordered complete rest for her, so we took a

cottage and came here. But it's only for the summer months!"

Carr's face cleared a little. Three months at least. Three months is a long time.

The rest of that day for Carr was woven of sunlight and dreams. The four had luncheon together at the little inn, the girls opening well-filled picnic baskets, Parminter contributing the trout—and no one knows what the word "fish" means who has not eaten trout broiled fresh from a Cumberland stream. The afternoon they spent in the flower-filled woods. They were a gay and merry party, even Parminter, good, solid Tom Parminter, who was not too quick in the uptake, distinguishing himself to-day. But Carr was a little silent, almost absent-minded. Parminter twitted him on his dullness as they tramped home through the soft May evening.

"Charming girls, aren't they?" he said. "Been everywhere, seen everything, and yet they're quite unspoiled. A bit too nimble-witted, perhaps. I don't always find it easy to get what they mean out of what they say. And you weren't much help to-day, either—dumb as a fish most of the time. Why, man," suddenly struck by something in Carr's face, "what's the matter with you?"

Carr laughed a little, and when he spoke, his voice was not quite steady.

"Tom, old chap, I've found my wife," he said, and his face flushed like a boy as he said it.

At first, of course, Parminter did not believe it. No man, he argued, ever settled so momentous a question so swiftly before. But by the end of the week, he had to. The cottage that the two girls had taken was not more than three miles from the house that Carr had bought, and no excuse was too trivial to take him there. He took books for Hilary, music for Dorothy, flowers for both. After the first few

days, he did not trouble to find a reason for going; he simply went. In front of the cottage was a lawn about as big as a good-sized tablecloth, with a standard rose in a little round bed at each corner. On it he had his tea as a matter of course every day. Frequently he stayed to share their simple supper, walking home through the cool May night that in Cumberland is never quite dark. Dorothy would look at her cousin sometimes with bright, amused, questioning eyes. Hilary was twenty-three; she knew what these things meant.

And one day in early June, when Carr had known the two girls barely a month, he told her, with a difficulty and a diffidence that surprised even himself, what was in his heart. They were sitting on a grassy slope, with a sheet of sunlit water—across which tiny white-sailed boats flitted back and forth like butterflies—spread out before them, and a haze of bluebells silencing the hillside behind. The scent of warm larch trees, still softly green, blew across them every now and then; a hawk hung, a speck in heaven, absolutely still above. Hilary's hands were full of flowers, flowers that grow nowhere else as they grow in Cumberland. They had been botanizing to the best of their ability, quarreling gayly over points that neither, out of the profundity of their ignorance, could settle. But now a silence had fallen, that peculiar silence with a throb behind it that only means one thing. Suddenly Carr laid his hand on hers.

"Hilary," he said hoarsely, "I think you know how it is with me. You're too honest with yourself not to have seen what I have felt from the first—for you. Dear—"

He choked, a sense of his own bald futility strangling him. He had meant to put it so differently. He had meant to say so much. And he could not say anything! He felt the hand under his

quiver and grow tense and still; he saw the curve of Hilary's cheek pale swiftly as she sat looking straight before her. But she did not take her hand away. The fact at least gave him command of the muscles of his throat.

"I don't ask anything definite yet," he went on. "Only that you won't deny yourself to me utterly—now you know—now you *know*! I thought you ought to know! I had to tell you, because, naturally, it's not an idea that would occur to you—of itself!" and neither of them noticed his self-contradiction. "I am, of course, dreadfully conscious of my temerity in even suggesting—I'm seventeen years your senior. I never have been, I never *could* be—worthy of you—"

The color came warmly back to Hilary's face. She turned upon him with dewy eyes.

"Don't!" she said brokenly. "I *won't* have you—belittle yourself so! If you knew—how glad I am—how grateful!"

"Glad!" echoed Carr, aghast. "*Grateful!*"

The girl laughed, a little broken laugh infinitely happy.

"I suppose I oughtn't to tell you," she said very low. "People say one should never tell a man—these things."

"What things?" asked Carr breathlessly, and put masterful arms about her.

"Graham," she whispered, her sweet eyes hidden on his rough, gray sleeve, "I think I've loved you ever since I was seven years old."

After which, words, as a means of expression, were superfluous and impertinent.

And even yet Carr was doubtful. His good fortune seemed beyond belief. But Hilary was generous. If she gave, she gave with both hands.

"People," she told him presently, when the music of her voice would once again convey definite ideas to his brain,

"make a mistake about women. They think their happiness depends on finding some one who loves *them*. I'm twenty-three, and more than one man has loved me—or said he did. It never gave me one moment's happiness; it caused me, instead, the most acute distress. What a woman looks for, throughout her life, is the man that *she* can love. If she marries him, so much the better for her. But if for any reason she cannot, still she is happy, because she has won from life the best that there is. You have lived in my memory as the nicest, the dearest, the best man I have ever known. I haven't cared for the others, not because they were not lovable, but simply because they were not you. I should never have married. I might never have known it if I hadn't seen you again, but I should have gone through all my life—loving you."

"Why?" asked Carr, simply to prolong assurances so sweet.

"Because you're so *good*."

He drew back as if the soft and slender hand held so tightly in his own had struck him.

"Hilary, don't!" he said hoarsely. "You mustn't idealize me! I'm not worth it. I am—no better than other men, perhaps a good deal worse. There are things you ought to know—now—before we—go farther—"

The look in Hilary's eyes silenced him.

"Tell me," she said with absolute confidence. "I can forgive anything *you* can have done."

He moved as one moves in intolerable pain.

"I—wish you weren't quite so sure of me. You make it—very difficult. I don't think, if I tell you, you will—ever forgive."

"I will"—the girl's face had set a little—"if you tell me."

There was a moment's deep silence.

Carr broke it with dogged determination.

"I'm nearly forty," he said. "It isn't likely that I've lived till now without a woman in my life. There was one, once. I—I worshiped her. I lived for years her spaniel and her slave."

He stopped, contemplating the degradation of that amazing servitude. Yet it was true that for years he had been Madge Featherstone's abject spaniel and slave. Hilary's voice roused him.

"Did you—marry her?"

"I couldn't. She was another man's wife. I—I tried to behave decently," miserably offering to the girl sitting rigid beside him what excuse was possible. "I told the husband. I kept, at first, as much as I could out of her way. In the end, she—left him."

"With—"

"Good God, no! I didn't go to those lengths! With another fellow altogether."

"She was false—to you both?"

"Yes."

"How much was she—the elder?"

"Ten years—over. Hilary, you mustn't excuse—or condone. I was not only a fool—I was a blackguard. You've got to know it. You've got to take me, if you do take me, sins and all. I told you you wouldn't forgive me."

"But I will—I do!" clasping unsteady hands together, her forgotten flowers falling in a fragrant shower all down her white dress. "I told you I could forgive anything—and I would. Anything that you *told* me."

But Carr stared straight in front of him, his mouth grim and his heart bitter. For this was not the tale he had at first intended to tell—at all. If the telling of this in which he had not, as Hilary must see, been the most to blame could alter her face as it was altered now, what would she have looked like if he had told her the tale he had meant to tell at first—of prom-





He turned and kissed his hand to her again and again. And that, for poor little Pan-byu, was the end.

ises broken and confidence betrayed, of a woman deserted and a man disgraced?

But why should he rake up a story so painful? Why should he tell Hilary anything about it at all? Poor little Pan-byu had died early. By those two long, cruel years of waiting and silence to which he had condemned her, he had killed her as surely as if he had mercifully put a bullet through her heart the day he went away. He had known it when Downing sent him word of her death; he knew it now. But had he not expiated it in suffering and remorse? Had he not repented with

bitterness and tears? He had not intended to desert and betray. He had *intended* to send for her all through those two years, only the opportunity he wanted had never seemed to arrive. To be sure, he might have written. If he had written, perhaps poor little Pan-byu might not have died. If Hilary *knew!* But why should he tell her? Why dig up a secret fifteen years old, a secret buried in Downing's grave, for now Downing, and Forster, too, were dead? He started. Hilary's hand lay lightly on his arm.

"Graham," she asked very low, "is that all?"

He studied her fair face with somber eyes and said nothing.

"Because, if there's anything else, I will forgive it," in tremulous assurance. "Oh, don't leave anything—for me to find out! I'll forgive you *anything*—if only you'll tell me."

Still he was silent. She might forgive—yes; she might even marry him; but she could never again look at him, speak to him, think of him, as she had done ten minutes ago. He could not bear it; he could not fling away all that life had offered him ten minutes ago. Why should he? It *could* do no good, only harm. It would destroy her happiness as well as his own, for nothing but to satisfy his quixotic objection to being thought better than he was.

Is there any man anywhere who is not thought better than he is by some loving woman? How many men could stand before their wives for what they really are? If they did, would the women be the better for it? Was it not an unmitigated good that Hilary should go on thinking more of him than he deserved? Was it not his clear duty to shake himself free of the mistakes of the past and set his whole strength to the task of being what she thought him in the future? Suddenly his look cleared. He had made up his mind. He took her face between his two hands and kissed her gravely on the lips, again and again.

"Darling," he said, "I have told you all—all that it is in the very least necessary that you should know."

#### CHAPTER IV.

"Oh, Cynthia, isn't he splendid?"

Cynthia's brown eyes twinkled.

"Gay?" she returned, willfully misunderstanding. "He's the very beautifullest boy that ever I saw."

Hilary drew herself up a little, with the matronly air that always amused her half sister.

"I didn't mean Gay; I meant Graham," she explained, and Cynthia said, "Oh!" demurely, and watched the spirited tussle going on upon the lawn between her brother-in-law and his eldest, Thomas Gaynor Carr, *à la* three. For Graham and Hilary had been married now over four years. "Gay," as the laddie on the lawn was always called, was her first and only son. The jolly girl baby lying on a cushion at her mother's feet and jovially kicking the fattest of legs into the air had come a year ago to keep him company. But though Hilary was a devoted and tender mother, the coming of her children had not meant that tragedy of separation between husband and wife that the coming of children sometimes does. It was still Graham who filled the largest arc of her horizon, still Graham of whom her thoughts were fullest and of whom she talked most. She was talking of him now, her hands lying idly on the embroidery in her lap.

"I never knew any one quite like him," she murmured. "Really, Cynthia, I don't think he *has* any faults."

"Oh, they'll develop," Cynthia cheerfully assured her, still willfully misunderstanding. "You can't expect them to show *yet*. Not all of them."

"*Yet!* Do you mean Gay? But I wasn't thinking of him; I was thinking of his father."

"Yes," agreed Cynthia with whimsical resignation, "you always are," for she grew a little tired, sometimes, of her brother-in-law's perfections. It was time, in her opinion, that Hilary was "getting over it."

Graham himself saved her from the threatened monologue on his many virtues dawning in Hilary's dreamy eyes. He came up to them wiping the perspiration from his face and walking as well as he could with a shrilly protesting son embracing both his legs.

"No, young un, I can't play any more.

I'm tired. If you want any more romps, get Cynthia to play with you."

And Cynthia said, "All right. Come on, Gay," and ran off with the tireless three-year-old, her brown curls tossing in the breeze. Graham looked after her, his eyes warming.

"Jove, but that is a darling girl! I'm glad to have her here," he said.

"Oh, Graham, you are good," returned Hilary gratefully, for it was not every husband who would have opened both his house and his heart to his wife's penniless half sister, and she knew it.

Graham smiled a little wistfully. Was he "good?" Had four years' persistent endeavor to live up to what Hilary thought of him really produced that desirable result? His gaze swept over his surroundings—the gray-stone, slate-roofed house behind, redeemed from coldness by the creepers that clothed it to its chimneys, the flower-filled garden around it, the valley widening out before in peaceful pastoral beauty, the glow of a golden summer's afternoon lying over all. There was no test. He had an income sufficient for all his simple wants, an idolized wife and charming children. His life was an idyl, filled with exceeding beauty, wrapped in profound peace, passed amid the cool green solitudes he loved, under the shadow of the everlasting hills. It would be odd, he told himself, if a man could not be "good," circumstanced like this. But there was one little crumple in his rose leaves. He leaned over, curled baby up into a gurgling ball by tickling her small stomach, and spoke of it.

"One thing bothers me a little sometimes, sweetheart, and that's Cynthia's future. She's rather buried here. We live very quietly, we go nowhere, we see no one except our close friends, and they are mostly old fogies like me!"—"Graham!" remonstrated Hilary, with indignation. "It must be a

bit dull for her. She ought to have chances like other girls."

"She's only seventeen," returned Hilary tranquilly. "She has another five years before her, if she is to follow in my footsteps, and she couldn't do better. A girl can't make a greater mistake than to fall in love too early. It makes a woman of her, and the longer she can stay a girl, the better. I didn't learn what love could mean until I was turned twenty-three——"

The laugh in Graham's eyes checked her.

"A little earlier than that, sweetheart," he objected. "You told me once you were only seven."

"Oh, well," and Hilary bridled a little. "I hardly contemplated marriage at that age. No, dear, I'm not in the least anxious that Cynthia should have what are called 'chances' just yet. She's only a child. The longer we can keep her a child—— Graham, who is that?"

Graham turned. A stranger was making his way toward the house, a man of middle height, dressed like a gentleman. The rhododendron beds, a mass of that soft, cool color our grandmothers called "puce," hid him a moment, but he came clearly into view again as he mounted the steps and rang the old-fashioned bell.

"He's young," Hilary went on, much interested, for a stranger in Crossghyll was rare, "and he looks prosperous. I wonder who he can be. Perhaps," with a happy, mischievous laugh, "the sweetheart you are so anxious to find for Cynthia."

But there was no answering laugh in Graham's eyes. There had been for him something a little sinister about the strange visitor who had a moment ago stepped across his threshold; something alien, even inimical, in the lithe suppleness of his movements, in his very attitude as he stood conversing with the pretty parlor maid who had

answered his ring. Graham sat, his arm thrown over the back of the bench, staring somberly across the rhododendron bed at the cool, dark doorway that had swallowed the stranger. He was conscious of chill, even in the May sunshine. His heart beat a little, though he could not have told why, as the pretty parlor maid tripped down the steps and came across the garden toward him, a brass salver with a card upon it in her hand. Carr picked it up.

"Mr. Taw Sein Ko, Brazenose College, Oxford," read Hilary over his shoulder. "Good gracious, what a name! What does one call him for short! Mr. Taw or Mr. Ko!"

But Carr heard never a word. He was staring at the card he had put back upon the salver as if it had suddenly lifted a wicked head and hissed at him.

"He wants to see me, Janet?" he asked, and his voice did not sound quite like his own.

"Yes, sir."

"Where is he?"

"I showed him into the den, sir."

He stared at her a moment. It dimly surprised him that she should speak cheerfully, with the pretty color still unchanged on her cheeks. The den. The den was his own room, where he kept guns and flies and fishing rods, books on gardening, farming, poultry rearing, and bees. All the simple interests of his life were gathered there. Somehow the thought of Mr. Taw Sein Ko among them was horrible to him.

But as he walked up to the house, he recovered himself. The state of vague panic in which he found himself was, he reflected, really too ridiculous. His connection with Burma had been short, and had come to an end twenty years ago, but it had been long enough to render it possible that others remembered him besides—those who had occasion to remember him only too well. Mr. Taw Sein Ko might be—anybody;

an impecunious student, perhaps, who, having heard of his early connection with the country, had come to beg for financial assistance in getting back to his native land.

But Mr. Taw Sein Ko did not look in any need of financial assistance as he stood, bowing a little too deeply, smiling a little too deprecatingly, in the middle of Carr's own especial room. The panama hat he held against his heart was of the softest and finest obtainable; his clothes cried Bond Street from every seam; the pure pigeon's-blood ruby, carved into a seal and hanging from his slender gold watch chain—the only jewel he wore—was so large that one put it down at once as imitation.

Carr looked at his smooth yellow face, with its high, broad, flat cheek bones and sloping Eastern eyes, at his silky black hair, his spare, slender hands the color of old ivory, and his soul sickened within him. He bowed a little stiffly.

"Mr.——" he began.

"Taw Sein Ko," finished the stranger glibly. "From Burma," he added with a gentle smile.

Carr bowed again more stiffly than before, and had difficulty in preventing himself from saying, "Evidently."

"Will you sit down?" he substituted, indicating the roomy and luxurious chair in which he was wont to smoke his last pipe by the fire before going to bed.

Mr. Taw Sein Ko's spare Eastern figure was almost lost in its roomy depths. Somehow Carr hated to see him sitting there.

"You—called——" he began a little uncertainly.

"To see you," finished his visitor, helping out his hesitation.

"May I ask why?"

"I was requested to call by—friends of yours." The little pause before the word was by no means lost upon his

host. "They wished to hear something of you, after many years."

"Indeed?" Carr tried hard to bring to his dry lips the smile of polite satisfaction for which the occasion called. "You bring, then, letters of introduction?"

"No, not quite that." The stranger's phrases were well chosen and his foreign accent hardly perceptible. "They said it was not necessary—that their names would be sufficient."

"Their names! What are their names?"

"Maung Lat and Maung Hwla."

For a moment Carr sat very still. Mr. Taw Sein Ko's eyes glittered a little behind his half-closed lids, though one could not have said that he watched his host. But had he stared his widest, Carr would not have known. Before his mental vision rose suddenly a Burmese reception room, cool and dusk, agleam with silken hangings, heavy with the scent of flowers. Once again he saw an impassive-faced Oriental seated on a pile of cushions, a big black cigar in his mouth. Behind him stood two younger editions of himself, both smoking big black cigars and both studying him, Carr, with curious and rather hostile eyes, Maung Lat and Maung Hwla. Once again little Panbyu stood beside him in passionate self-surrender and utter trustfulness. The peculiar fragrance of the scent she always used was in his nostrils, the gentle touch of her hand lay once again upon his arm. The cool dimness of the room in which he sat turned dark before his eyes. Mr. Taw Sein Ko receded to an immense distance. In the middle of trying to understand so peculiar a phenomenon, he heard himself talking.

"Oh—ah—yes, of course. I remember them both quite well," he was saying a little vaguely. "I was for a time deputy commissioner in Upper Burma, as I dare say you know, and they were

—well, in a way neighbors of mine, though we lived half a day's journey apart. Do you happen to be son to either of them?"

"No," returned his visitor quietly. "We are related, but neither of them is my father."

Some instinct, deliberately crushed into the background of his mind and ignored, checked the obvious question upon Carr's very lips.

"Have you been in England long?" he asked, and in spite of himself, his words hurried.

"Five years. I came over when I was nearly fifteen. I had two years at a good school, and then I went to Oxford. I have just taken my degree."

Five years! He had had two years at a good school and he had just taken his degree! That meant three years at Oxford. That made him nearly twenty. With a sort of cold terror, Carr crushed down a mental suggestion at which he would not, dared not, look.

"And—now you are going back?" All the self-control he possessed could not quite stifle the note of ardent desire.

"No-o, not just yet. I wish to stay in England a little longer. I have"—the gentle Burmese smile spreading slowly across his face—"an ambition, a little private ambition, of which I will not tell you now, though I may later. I propose to stay, perhaps, another six months in England, to familiarize myself a little more with English life and habits."

"And then you return to Burma?" He could not hide his ardent hope, though he told himself again and again that the matter did not, could not, affect him personally one way or the other.

"It may be," was the cautious reply.

"And now, I suppose, you are going back to Oxford to finish your term?" Anything, anything to get rid of him!



"No-o, I think not. I have had of Oxford three years. I have lost interest—a little. Your sports, your boat racing, are to me now just a little what you call 'slow.' No, now I have my degree, I do not return to Oxford. Instead, I have taken a house near here, a furnished house, with servants. You will, I hope, help me to make a few friends after the hospitable English fashion. You, I am sure, made many friends in Burma."

"Yes, of course I will. I shall be delighted," with perfunctory politeness, though inwardly he raged.

The stranger rose.

"I will send word of you," he said gravely, "to your friends in Burma. They will be glad to hear of you. Now I take my leave. But I may come and see you again? Some day? Soon?"

"By all means," returned Carr. "I shall be delighted." The words seemed to be torn out of him. "Anything I can do for you, anything at all."

He offered his hand, but Mr. Taw Sein Ko did not take it. Instead, he put his expensive panama carefully upon the floor, joined the palms of his hands and the tips of his fingers together, and bowed over them in the pretty and profoundly respectful salutation of his country. Carr went down the garden to his wife, looking curiously pale.

"Who was it, dear?" she asked.

"A young chap from Burma. Odd, isn't it, after all these years? I can't think how they've kept track of me all this time."

"Who?" asked Hilary.

"His friends, the people, who sent him. He's taken a house up here, it seems—Mason's house, I should imagine, at the other side of Crossghyll—and he's looking to me to help him make a friend or two."

"To you! Then will he come here again?"

"Yes. You'll help to make things pleasant for him, won't you? It's only

for a little while, and one must, of course, make some return——"

But for the first time in her married life, Hilary demurred.

"Do you think it wise, dear, to encourage a—a visitor of that kind? Of course, in India, one has to mix with people of color to a certain extent, but here at home, in England——"

And Carr for the first time answered her sharply.

"Really, Hilary, I should have thought you had had time to get over youthful prejudices," he said. "As a matter of fact, it's in India that there is difficulty. In England it doesn't matter two straws. Every one treats them as equals."

Hilary looked quickly at him and away again.

"Does one ever get over one's youthful prejudices?" she asked softly.

## CHAPTER V.

"It's such a *dreadfully* long name, Mr. Taw Sein Ko!" Cynthia tossed back her brown curls and glanced up at him, her brown eyes bright with fun. "Can't we call you something—for short?"

The gentle Burmese smile spread slowly across Mr. Taw Sein Ko's yellow face. He gazed at pretty Cynthia as if he could never gaze enough.

"Call me 'Jimmy,'" he suggested presently, and his soft, low tones made his slightly foreign-sounding English very pleasant to hear. "All the fellows called me Jimmy—back there."

"Back where?"

"Oh, in Oxford."

"Then I *will*! It'll be so much more convenient. Jimmy! It seems to suit you somehow——"

"Cynthia, you won't do anything at all of the sort," rebuked Hilary sharply, but Cynthia shook a willful shoulder.

"Good gracious, Hilary, why shouldn't I?" she demanded, and her



But Carr never even saw Miss Trent; his eyes were entirely occupied with the girl with the crimson parasol.

protesting "Hilary is always so dreadfully particular!" floated back to Hilary and her husband as they three—Cynthia, Gay, and Mr. Taw Sein Ko—wandered off down the garden together.

For they were always together now. Mr. Taw Sein Ko came over from his new home at the other side of Crossghyll nearly every day, pathetically pleading his loneliness, and begging quite frankly to be allowed to make the most of this unique opportunity for the study of English family life. Cynthia

welcomed him. He was a new and delightfully unusual playfellow, full of quaint details of life in Burma, seeing everything European from a point of view as fascinating as it was novel. She regarded him, if only he had known it, very much as a Georgian lady of quality must have regarded the little black boy who carried her train and her fan and amused her unoccupied hours with his antics and chatter.

To Gay, he was a godsend. No one ever before had made for him toys so

altogether acceptable. Given a knife and a bit of wood, Mr. Taw Sein Ko could evolve therefrom boats such as never sailed an English stream before, and bullock gharries, with bits sawn off a broomstick end for wheels, that were enchanting to play with and charming to see.

Down by the little brook that ran through the wilder part of the garden, Mr. Taw Sein Ko, a weird and astonishing sight in his European clothes, would squat on his haunches by the hour together, with Gay squatting in anxious imitation beside him and Cynthia lying on her face on the warm grass, her elbows dug into it and her clasped hands under her little round chin, absorbedly watching all that he did. They looked a happy, contented, most companionable trio that one would have imagined could have given only pleasure to the beholder. But the sight of them turned Carr's heart to ice and Hilary's to fire.

"I don't like it!" she was saying now to her husband. "I don't like it at all! Cynthia is only a child. She's interested in him and admires and likes him very much as she would admire and like and be interested in a tame dancing bear or a dear dog that in some miraculous fashion had learned how to talk. But that isn't the way in which he thinks she regards him. Her frank friendliness and constant companionship mean to him something very different. Watch him when he looks at her. Listen to the note in his voice when he speaks to her. If you can't see, Graham, you must be blind indeed!"

Carr moved uneasily and answered nothing.

"It seems to me—so unfair." Hilary's voice had a deeper note in it as she took up her protest again. "To him, I mean. It isn't as if the thing were in any way possible!"

The touch of horror stung Carr.

"Aren't you letting your imagination run away with you a little?" he asked. "I don't see all this in it."

His voice faded out. "I have an ambition," Mr. Taw Sein Ko had confided; "an ambition that I will not mention now, though some day I may tell you what it is!" Was *this* it?

"No," with decision. "And I'm not suspicious, I am certain. I suppose a man doesn't always see these things, but a woman does. And to me the thought of any intermixture of races—like that—is revolting. You told me once I was prejudiced. Of course I am, like all Anglo-Indians, as you are yourself if only you would acknowledge it. You can't imagine *yourself* marrying a native woman! The thing is a nightmare, an outrage upon all that is finest in European tradition. I can't bear that my little Cynthia should be even asked for—by a *Mongolian*! I think you ought to prevent it, Graham."

"Good God, how can I? What would you suggest that I should do?"

"I would suggest that you do not have him here quite so often. You can't, perhaps, prevent his coming, since he doesn't wait now for invitations—he comes when he thinks he will, just as if he had a right here—but you needn't encourage him to stay, ask him to luncheon and even to dinner—"

"If I remember rightly, it was Cynthia who asked him to dinner. I don't invite him. I don't want him."

"Then why *don't* you let him see it? You don't, perhaps, invite him, but you tacitly agree to his being here—a great deal too much. Choke him off a little, Graham, for his own sake. Show him he isn't quite as welcome as he thinks he is."

"Sweetheart, I can't!" in desperate acknowledgment. "I am under unescapable obligations to him."

Hilary stared.

"To *him*! How can that be? When you left Burma, he wasn't born."

"I should have said to his family," amended Carr quietly.

But, after all, he asked himself, when Hilary, deeply disturbed and a little resentful, had left him and gone indoors, why should he be so sure? If Pan-byu, little, gentle, dark-eyed Pan-byu, had had a son, it must have been some one's duty to acquaint him with the fact. It was unthinkable that it should not have come to his ears before now. And Mr. Taw Sein Ko's face, in line and color, was purely Burmese. He caught himself studying it with horribly anxious eyes when, a little later, Mr. Taw Sein Ko came up to him, Cynthia walking on one side of him and Gay clinging to his cool, spare, lemon-colored hand on the other.

"Graham, may Jimmy stay to lunch?" asked Cynthia. "We want to do such a lot this afternoon, and we'll never have time if he goes home."

"Daddy, Jimmy stay to lunch," piped Gay in anxious support.

Carr hesitated. Yet what could he say, with Mr. Taw Sein Ko, otherwise "Jimmy," standing in gentle, smiling confidence before him.

"You'd better tell Hilary," he returned a little uncertainly, and Cynthia, seeing nothing amiss, said, "Come on, then. We'll go and tell her."

So Jimmy stayed to lunch and, beyond one look of reproach, Hilary made no protest. But she did not come, as usual, to sit by her husband's side in the scented garden through the long golden afternoon. He was left to the grim company of his thoughts.

Yet why, he asked himself again and again, *why* was he so sure? With a sort of dogged courage, he faced what was, what must be, the truth. There was no other possible explanation of the present situation. Other Burmans of position and wealth come, it is true, to England and go back steeped in the civilization of the West to their own land, to apply for and probably obtain

positions that only a Western education would enable them to fill. But they do not find their way into remote Cumberland villages, and reconstruct for a simple and harmless English gentleman his buried and almost forgotten early sins, without definite and sinister intentions.

Slowly, all that Carr had heard of the Burman disposition rose clear and well defined in his memory—the cruelty, the vindictiveness, that lie under the careless, light-hearted *bonhomie* of their usual manner; the revenge they will take for an injury, sometimes after many years. The Burman is slow to quarrel, but give him something to resent and he resents it bitterly and to the end. On the surface, nothing could be more suave, more sincere, more smilingly appreciative, than Mr. Taw Sein Ko's manner, but Carr distrusted it; he had good reason. To him there was a quiet menace in the stranger's oblique eye and yellow face, and it terrified him.

For a moment his thoughts clung round those nearest and dearest to him—Hilary, Gay, baby. Did peril overhang, not him, but those he loved? With a savage mental shake he fought hard for his ordinary common sense. He had no proof, he told himself, none. The whole horrible position might be nothing but a figment of his own brain, born of a too-vivid imagination and an accusing conscience. But his efforts at self-comfort fell away, wilted and shriveled up in the fierce blast of his own certainty. He knew, oh, he *knew*—and the thing was intolerable.

The pretty parlor maid brought tea out into the garden at the usual time, but at the sound of the gong, only Hilary came. She looked about her in some surprise.

"Where is Master Gay, Janet," she asked, "and Miss Cynthia?"

"Master Gay is in the nursery, ma'am, with baby, and Miss Cynthia is in her room. I think Mr. Taw Sein Ko

has gone home, 'm," she finished, as if that explained both phenomena.

Hilary looked at her husband, and there was a touch of apprehension in her eyes.

"I'll see what is the matter, Graham, if you don't mind. I won't be a minute," she said.

Carr moved uneasily. Why should she think there was anything the matter? But there was. She came back with the information that Cynthia's door was locked and that she didn't want any tea; she had a headache.

"It's that horrible yellow man, I'm positive!" she said, with a touch of excitement. "He has either done or said something!"

"My dearest, what nonsense!" returned Carr sharply, for he was fighting his own misgivings as well as Hilary's. "What can he have either done or said to give Cynthia a headache?"

It was a nightmare meal, silent, heavily shadowed with vague tragedy, a meal the like of which had never been eaten in Crossghyll Manor garden before. When it was over, Carr drew Hilary down to her knees beside him and held her close, kissing her fair face again and again in a very passion of mute apology. Sweetly she responded, solacing, warming, contenting him. She was not, as a rule, demonstrative, but when she gave, she gave with both hands. Yet she could not forbear the little mistaken feminine reproach that goes like an arrow tipped with gall to a man's heart.

"Yes, Graham, but if you love me so much, why don't you do as I ask you?"

"I can't, darling!" he groaned. "I can't!"

But in the evening, he realized that he would have to do something, for Mr. Taw Sein Ko sought him in his study, with a grave, respectful, definite proposal for Cynthia's hand in marriage.

"I had an ambition," he reminded

his host. "I told you at the first, did I not? Well, this is my ambition. I have wished always to marry an English girl. All my five years in England I look about—but I see no one. When I see Miss Cynthia, so frank, so charming, so friendly, I say, 'There is my English wife.' I told her to-day. She is young, but she will get used gradually—"

"My dear fellow, don't!" interrupted Carr. "It's—it's utterly impossible."

"Why?" asked Mr. Taw Sein Ko—and Carr was silent.

"I love her," the young Burman went on presently, "with all the fervor of my land and all the deep respect of yours. I do not ask her to come to the wilds. I take service under government in Burma. We live in Mandalay, or, better, in Rangoon, where there are many English. And it is not only that. I am rich, ver' rich. I make career, yes, but I am not compelled. If she likes not to live in Burma, I come to England in a few years—"

"My dear fellow," repeated Carr with a touch of pity, "it isn't the least use. You can't marry her, whatever you are willing to do."

"Why not?"

"Well, we'll take the first and foremost reason. She wouldn't have you."

"That is not so," the denial came quick. "She like me. She say so. With persuasion, ever so little persuasion, she marry me. You could persuade her. You could tell her that marriages like this are not unusual, that it is not every one who will object. You are the last who should object. Tell her so. You could persuade her, ver' quick, if you would tell her that which you and I know."

Carr sat slowly back in his chair, and the air in the study seemed to turn to ice about him. "That which you and I know." The words boomed and thundered in his ears.

He crushed down his panic with a



muttered oath. After all, after *all*, he might be torturing himself unnecessarily. Mr. Taw Sein Ko claimed little. Surely, surely, if what Carr dreaded were true, he would have claimed more than this. He rose, feeling vaguely that he had had about as much as he could stand.

"You can only leave it for the present," he said hoarsely. "Leave it to me. Cynthia as yet is too young to think of marriage at all. England isn't Burma. But one thing I'll tell you: If she loves you, as you think or at least hope she does, she'll marry you when she is twenty-one in the face of every one's opposition. English girls do as they like when they are twenty-one."

"Twenty-one? Over four years! It is a long time."

"Yes, it's a long time."

"I may see her—meanwhile?"

"Yes, if she wishes it."

Mr. Taw Sein Ko joined the tips of all his fingers together, pointed his slim hands at Carr, and shikhoed with deep respect. Carr watched him with dark, troubled eyes. Was there a trace of triumph behind all that abject humility?

"I leave it, then, to you," he said quietly, and went.

That night there was a long and earnest consultation. Hilary did her best not to be too triumphant at this rapid proving of her powers of insight, but she could not quite hide what she felt.

"I knew it," she told her husband. "I saw it from the first. He must have seen her somewhere and followed her here. What else should bring him to Crossghyll? And it won't be easy to get him to go away again. There's a quiet persistence about him——"

"It won't if Cynthia is going to encourage him," interrupted Carr a little grimly.

"What? Cynthia—— *What?*"

"He *says* she does," in desperate acknowledgment. "He seems to think she

would marry him—with a little persuasion."

"Marry! Cynthia is a child, a baby! She doesn't know what marriage means! She pictures nothing but playing with him in the garden all day long. If he's a pleasant companion for one day, she sees no reason why he shouldn't be a pleasant companion for every day. But *marriage!* Let him once try to kiss her——"

"He's a Burman. He wouldn't *dream* of it."

"Then it's all the more dangerous, for there will be nothing to—wake her up to facts. Graham, she can't stay here. No one knows what promise she might be persuaded into. We must get her away *somewhere*."

"The sooner, the better," returned Carr, in somber and unexpected agreement.

And so it came that the next morning, very early, two ladies left Crossghyll station for Carnforth. Grannie lived at Silverdale, and to grannie's care a subdued and quite amenable Cynthia was to be committed until Mr. Taw Sein Ko, otherwise Jimmy, had left Crossghyll for good. She would be quite safe with grannie. If Mr. Taw Sein Ko had really possessed all the devilish Eastern arts with which Hilary credited him, he could hardly trace her there.

To Carr fell the task of acquainting Mr. Taw Sein Ko with her departure. He did it with a touch of awkwardness, while "Jimmy" watched him with an oblique and glittering eye.

"It is—not as you think," he said. "Miss Forster has no thought of marriage yet—with you or any one else. She is far too young. She has gone away, leaving to me the task of convincing you that she is quite, *quite* in earnest when she says that she does not wish to see you any more."

"Gone! You mean that you have sent her away—that you consider my



The sight of the happy, contented trio turned Carr's heart to ice and Hilary's to  
Cynthia is only a child. If you can't see,



fire. "I don't like it!" she was saying now to her husband. "I don't like it at all! Graham, you must be blind indeed!"

proposal an insult and my love a shame."

Angry emotion choked him. Carr shrugged just a little.

"I'm sorry that it means so much to you," he said, a difficult justice constraining him. "But really you might have seen, you should have known, that the thing is impossible."

The sudden blaze in Mr. Taw Sein Ko's eyes checked him.

"Impossible!" he echoed, and his voice was sibilant and low. "Why? You, at least, should not say that! You, at least, need not have sent from before my face the maiden I would choose from all the world! A word from you would have helped me, but you do not speak it. I remember it, never fear!" And the snarling muscles of our arboreal ancestors, not yet entirely atrophied, lifted his upper lip for a moment, so that Carr stared in a kind of horrible fascination.

At the door, he turned, his natural Burmese courtesy, his carefully learned European manners, both forgotten.

"I remember, never fear!" he said again and went.

After which he came no more to Crossghyll Manor, at least openly, but Carr had a subtle, horrible conviction that he haunted the scenes of his lost happiness at night. A shadow would flit silently across the dimness of a shady path, a black something give the bushes a darker center than was theirs by right, a black something that he knew would evolve into Mr. Taw Sein Ko if he had had the courage to investigate its origin. But he never did. If there were a close tie of blood between him and this alien intruder on his peace, it was peculiarly impotent to draw them together. In the neighborhood of Mr. Taw Sein Ko, he was conscious of a repulsion that touched nausea.

It was when Cynthia had been gone about a week that an odd little accident

happened, to Carr deeply disquieting. Dorothy Trent had come on a few days' visit, and Hilary gave a little dinner in her honor. Tom Parminter, Gay's godfather, was present—good, solid Tom, who had long ago laid all his honest heart at Dorothy's feet—and two or three more of Carr's old and intimate friends.

The manor establishment was a modest one, and a dinner party taxed its resources. When baby was safely asleep in her cot, nurse, knowing that her help would be appreciated, went down into the kitchen to cook. The little burst of talk and laughter, as the dining-room door opened when the meal was over, warned her that she had been downstairs longer than she had intended. She ran up the back staircase as, with a little cry, Hilary ran up the front.

For faint blue wreaths of smoke were curling across the landing upon which the nursery door opened, floating down the staircase, dimming the golden glow of the flowerlike electrolights in the hall. In the nursery doorway, Hilary stood aghast. She could not breathe; she could not see. The room was full of suffocating smoke, and where, *where* was baby? Before she could plunge through it, a quiet figure stepped out, and baby, still asleep, was safe in her arms.

"I was passing, Mrs. Carr," said Mr. Taw Sein Ko's gentle, well-known voice, "and it is well I was. I saw smoke coming from the window—the front door was open—and I ran in. Don't cry! Please don't cry! I put the fire out with water—much water. Baby all right now."

He ran down the staircase, coughing a little and ignoring Carr's stumbling, broken words of thanks. They died upon his lips as Mr. Taw Sein Ko's sleek head and slim figure disappeared into the scented night, silenced, shriveled, dead, before a horrible suspicion.

Had Mr. Taw Sein Ko put the fire out—or had he lighted it?

#### CHAPTER VI

The next few days were passed by Hilary in a state of acute repentance that she had up to now so signally failed to appreciate the many excellent qualities of Mr. Taw Sein Ko. So deep was her gratitude for his rescue of baby from the smoke that, short of bringing back Cynthia to his side, there was nothing in the world she would not have done for him. She opened to him with impulsive generosity not only her house, but, as far as she was able, her heart. How to repay him in some way for the boundless service he had rendered her was the problem she faced day and night. On some of her plans Carr, to her surprise, set a heavy foot, especially on her inclination to reestablish Jimmy as playmate in chief to Gay.

"No, dear," he decided with unwonted firmness. "We've got rid of the fellow, and we'll stay rid of him. You yourself don't really want him back, and as for me, I'd be thankful if I never set eyes on him again!"

Hilary's surprised look silenced him. He had spoken with more bitterness than he knew.

"But it seems such a *thing*," she objected plaintively, "that after what has happened, we should refuse his acquaintance! Of course, if Cynthia were here, I could understand, but as she isn't——"

"We don't refuse his acquaintance. Invite him, if you like, when other guests are here. But as for letting him trot in and out at all hours of the day or night as he used to before——"

He broke off with a slight shudder. What might not come of it?

Hilary listened dubiously.

"Well," she agreed, "perhaps it is better not. Besides"—and her face cleared—"now Cynthia isn't here, I don't suppose he would want to."

But they reckoned without Gay, who, deprived of both his playfellows, was bereft indeed. He had to be watched morning, noon, and night lest his sturdy little legs carry him through one or other of the manor gates out into the wide, wide world to find Jimmy. Hilary thought of the motor-ridden roads and shuddered. Carr's dread was more vague, but even more disquieting. A known danger can be guarded against; an unknown may come from any side and find one unprepared to meet it. Carr, a prey to nervous fears, the worse to bear that they were so undefined, got at last into such a state that he was happy only with his little son in his arms.

But Gay was a vigorous and independent youngster, with a passion for exploration and adventure. A very little "carrying about" contented him. The garden without either Cynthia or Jimmy in it proved a veritable Sahara, all dust and dryness, and the nursemaid specially told off to see that he stayed in it had a task that kept her busy. The day came when it was beyond her. Just for a moment, her vigilance slept, and Gay, instantly aware of it, was gone. Carr missed him first.

"Gay! Gay!" he called up and down the garden, in the meadow beyond, yellow with buttercups, a field of the cloth of gold indeed, all over the house from attic to cellar.

"Has any one seen that boy?" he asked, and he knew that his lips were white as he asked it.

He had been seen here; he had been seen there; but at the present moment no one could find him anywhere. They traced him through the house to the stable yard at the back, and there they lost him completely.

"Has the gate been open?" demanded Carr, and his eyes were alight and his voice not steady.

"Only for a moment, sir, when the grocer's cart came. I had to unlock it



then, for the man to take the things up to the kitchen door."

It was Reid, his chauffeur, groom, and handy man generally, a dependable and trustworthy fellow. Carr turned to him.

"Have you been here all the morning?"

"Yes, sir, except just the moment when I helped to carry in the groceries."

The band about Carr's heart slackened a little.

"Then you would have seen Master Gay if he had been near the gate, wouldn't you?"

"I think so, sir. I think I must have done."

And the note of doubt by no means escaped Carr's ear. It drove him to search farther afield. By midday, the hue and cry was all over Crossghyll. Master Gay, whom everybody knew by sight, was missing, and all their little world turned out to look for him. But deep down in Carr's heart lay the conviction that there was only one place in which he was likely to be found, and that was somewhere near Jimmy.

He mastered a moment of sick hesitancy and then made his way to the handsome English house, with its retinue of well-trained English servants, of which, for the time being, Mr. Taw Sein Ko was master. There he was checked again. Mr. Taw Sein Ko, he was told, had left early that morning for London, but was returning that night. Carr stood in the hall, the subtle, but insistent perfume that emanated from all Mr. Taw Sein Ko's belongings all round him on the warm air. There was nothing to do, nothing, he told himself, but wait until his enemy came back.

And suppose he did not come back! Suppose he never came back at all! Suppose he had vanished forever and taken Gay with him! Carr lay the greater part of that day on a sunny

slope just inside a little wood, his face hidden in the bend of his arm, his soul sick with the sense of the futility of effort, of punishment well deserved and fallen at last. He thought of Hilary at home, distracted with terror and faint with crying. He thought of little Gay, lost and forlorn, perhaps in active peril. He thought of gentle, dark-eyed Pan-byu, waiting and watching through those long, agonizing years during which he had never come and never written. And whatever had been the measure of his sin toward her, he expiated it that morning.

But even now, with the realization of his cruelty to her full upon him, he could not believe that it was Pan-byu who had tried to punish him, had stabbed him from the grave in which she had lain so many years. Pan-byu, whatever his fault, would never have punished him. But her son might, her son, who would naturally hate not only the father who hesitated to acknowledge him, but also the boy who had supplanted him. He would want to make him suffer, and Carr understood and acquiesced. It was right that he should suffer, if he could have kept the suffering for himself, but that Hilary should suffer, too—and little Gay!

"If he strikes at me through them," Carr muttered for the thousandth time that day, "he isn't a man, he's a devil."

He met the train by which Mr. Taw Sein Ko was to return from London, though he had no hope whatever that he would come by it. And there, stepping out of a first-class carriage, his person carefully groomed, his toilet correct to the last button, he was. Carr walked up to him. It was difficult, it was degrading, to have to confess the calamity that had befallen his home to the man whom he believed to be the author of it, but there was just a chance that he would stay his avenging hand on the edge of peril as he had done once before, and Carr got through his

story somehow. Jimmy listened, and if his concern were simulated and his sympathy a sham, then the Burman as an actor, Carr reflected, is an artist indeed. And he had not only sympathy to offer; he had suggestions also.

"Poor little chap! Wherever can he have got to? Have you remember' the gypsies?" he asked suddenly.

"What gypsies?"

"There *are* gypsies on the common, not five miles away. I see them last night as I ride by. I wouldn't wonder he is there. Get the car and go over. I come with you if you like. And you better take one gendarme, polliissman. They are queer lot, gypsies. Thank you. I have dined—on the train."

And the impossible had happened—Carr and Mr. Taw Sein Ko were walking in anxious amity up to Crossghyll together.

They set off at once, Jimmy, the "polliissman," and Carr, Carr, who was a magistrate, armed with his own search warrant, and a little ray of hope lit up in Hilary's drowned eyes. If any one could bring Gay back, Jimmy could; Jimmy, who had so providentially saved baby from the smoke not a fortnight ago.

It was a typical gypsies' encampment they came to in the golden light of the summer's evening—one or two bothies, made of bent poles covered with dark and weather-stained blankets, a fire, and a pot, trestle hung, over it, in which was cooking a fine hare that the day's legitimate trading had certainly never provided. A man who might have been own brother to Petalengro rose from his seat, pipe in mouth, as they came up, and eyed them with a sort of surly civility.

"Yes," he said at once, in answer to Carr's hurried explanation of their errand. "Yes, he is here. The women have him. We found him wandering, and we guessed some one would be looking for him before long. Rachel!"

But his glance at the nearest bothy was enough for Carr. He lifted the indescribably filthy tent flap and plunged in.

On a pile of nondescript bedding in the corner lay Gay fast asleep, his little pale face all grimed with tears and dust, his rounded baby limbs limp and still. With his treasure in his arms, Carr scrambled out again, but Gay did not wake. His curly head hung helpless on his father's arm, his dark lashes never moved. One glance was enough for Carr.

"He's been drugged," he said.

Petalengro Redivivus met the fury in his eyes with calm courage.

"He cried so," he returned. "We were afraid he'd hurt himself, so the women—gave him something. It won't do him any harm. He'll be all right to-morrow. We were going to look for his friends—to-morrow."

Jimmy looked from one to the other, leaned over the boy, and lifted one of his eyelids with a cool, lemon-colored finger.

"He all right. Better soon," he said.

Carr strode off with the child, shaking with rage. Mr. Taw Sein Ko stayed behind a moment, quite evidently rewarding the people of the camp for their care of the boy and his ready restoration. And he dare not punish, he dare not even threaten! If he punished, he must punish the prime instigator of the outrage, the smooth, yellow-faced Mongolian, and not his tools. He, of course, had planned the whole thing, to give Carr a foretaste of what his vengeance would be when it fell, to show him the precipice upon which he stood, to drive him, if possible, into a tardy justice, lest worse should befall him.

Carr stared at him with a kind of fascinated horror as he sat opposite him in the car on the homeward run, quiet, smiling, self-possessed, his oblique and glittering eyes resting every now and

then with dreadful understanding on Carr's face. His son! His eldest and legitimate son, whom he was bound, if he would keep about his shivering soul any shred of honor, to acknowledge to the world! He bent over the bonny sleeping boy in his arms almost with a groan. It could not be so. It *could* not be!

The next day Gay was "all right," even as Jimmy had said he would be, and the sight of him running and shouting, joyous and unharmed, in the garden filled Hilary's soul with floods of gratitude. No longer would she be forbidden its expression. At her earnest entreaty, Jimmy stepped back into all his old intimacy and more. He was always, now, at Crossghyll, either playing, contented and naive as a child, with Gay, or sitting on a cushion at Hilary's feet, his black eyes blinking up at her, by the hour together. Undoubtedly she liked to have him there, to indulge him and pet him and talk to him. She even let him talk about Cynthia. Had he not saved for her both her darling children? Nothing but a complete explanation could have rid Carr of his presence, and it poisoned the very air he breathed.

He took to sitting at a little distance, far enough away to avoid hearing their conversation, which Hilary laughingly told him was confidential, but near enough to see the effect of it upon Hilary's face. How long would it be, he asked himself, before he saw that dear face freeze into repulsion and terror, before he was called upon to confirm or deny the tale that would destroy her confidence in him forever? How long would it be, if he still held out against the quiet, but persistent pressure that was being put upon him, before some other blow, sharper and heavier still, was aimed at his defenseless heart?

The vengeance that hits a man through those that are dear to him is

peculiarly hard to meet and peculiarly dastardly. It was that Carr dreaded. When Hilary was alone with Jimmy, he never knew a happy moment. He sat in the garden always within call. He "shadowed" them, unseen, when they walked, as they sometimes did, in the woods or down by the lake shore together, but he dared not even hint at his disquiet, lest Hilary should ask an explanation. There came a night when the strain upon him grew unendurable, when he had to say something.

"Hilary," he began desperately, and he knew that his forehead was damp and his lips were blue, "we shall have to get away from here."

Hilary's face showed her extreme surprise.

"Away from Crossghyll in the summertime! When everything is lovely! Graham! *Why?*"

Why? How could he tell her that punishment for an old sin, vengeance for an early treachery to a woman who had loved him, was upon him at last; that Nemesis, sword in hand, stalked in his footsteps, ready to strike, not his guilty self, but the innocent ones he loved? If it had been only himself! If we could all be sure that the punishment for our sins will fall only upon ourselves! A hundred times a day he hovered on the verge of a straight talk with Jimmy, but he "funked it" always, for fear of what his demands might be. Better, perhaps, to let things slide, to wait for some Heaven-sent chance of deliverance. It did not, however, lie in his desperate plan of leaving Crossghyll to the enemy. There Hilary was firm.

"I can't think why we *should*," she told him plaintively. "Of course, if you had a good reason! But there doesn't seem to me to be any reason at all!"

Carr turned away, dropping the matter with a mental groan. How could he tell her that her pet and protégé was



The little boat flitted back and forth on the blue waters of the lake like a gigantic butterfly.

the reason, Jimmy, with the latent threatening of his watchful eye, the constant menace of his quiet smile.

Meanwhile, the friendship between the wife that he loved and the man that he hated, though he believed him to be his own son, grew day by day. Hilary seemed to have laid her prejudices aside for good and all. She approved all Jimmy's plans; she yielded to all his wishes. Had he not restored to her both her darling babies? It was evident, one glorious summer's afternoon, that Jimmy was proposing some expedition. Carr could see his slim yellow hand pointing across the lake. He followed them, himself unseen, down through the wood to the tiny boathouse at the edge. Surely she was not going on the water, Hilary, who was nervous of the wind-swept lake even with him! But she was! He saw from behind a bush Jimmy step the mast of the tiny

sailing boat he kept there and push it out of the shed. Hilary was in it. Carr, afraid of he knew not what, ran down into the boathouse, climbed into a little rowboat, loosened the painter, and gripped the sculls.

At first there seemed no cause for alarm. Jimmy, like all his countrymen, was a skilled waterman. The little boat, tacking against the breeze and evidently making for the opposite shore, flitted back and forth on the blue waters of the lake like a gigantic butterfly. And then it happened. How it happened Carr never knew, but he saw Jimmy stand up; saw the sail, idiotically handled, flap a moment against the mast; and then the boat turned over as a child's toy turns over at the first gust, and Hilary and Jimmy, too, were in the water.

Carr's boat shot out from the gloom of the boathouse, and he rowed as he

had never rowed in all his life before. At first Hilary and Jimmy were both clinging to the bottom of the upturned boat, but when he reached it, only Hilary was there. Where Jimmy was he did not know and did not care. With superhuman effort he dragged his wife, half conscious, into the light and swaying craft.

"Oh, Graham," she gasped, "save Jimmy! He saved me!"

#### CHAPTER VII.

If only he were dead! If only! No one could blame him, Carr, if he were. Jimmy had disappeared. Carr knew him to be a strong swimmer, and his, Carr's, first duty had beyond all question been to the wife he worshiped, lying dripping and senseless at his feet. If only he were dead! If only he *were*! Carr sat beside the bed on which Hilary lay sleeping and almost prayed that at last he might be rid of his enemy.

But he was not. The first news to reach the manor in the morning was of his being found in a state of great exhaustion on the lake shore, and of his having been taken home by one of Carr's own men in one of Carr's own carts.

Hilary, now nearly recovered, was full of gentle thankfulness. Carr listened to her in somber silence. On one point at least his mind was made up. At the cost of any explanation, any sacrifice, Mr. Taw Sein Ko should never enter the gates of Crossghyll Manor again.

The severe chill that followed Hilary's immersion put a stop, for the time being, to all intercourse. Carr could not prevent her sending a message of grateful thanks to the man whom she regarded as her preserver, but there could be no question of her seeing him until she was well. Carr met him about a fortnight later in the village, a rather wan and pathetically shrunken Jimmy,

a Jimmy who had quite evidently also been very ill. A vague wonder that he should risk his own life as well as Hilary's was in Carr's mind as he faced him, but miscalculations, of course, are always possible. Carr made no pretense of friendliness or gratitude; he did not offer his hand. The peculiarity of his position prevented the open vengeance for which he thirsted, but he would do what he could. He stood squarely in front of the man he hated in the strong sunshine, and Jimmy blinked up at him, curious, but not afraid.

"I want you to understand," Carr began, "that I am aware that—what happened a fortnight ago—was not an accident."

Jimmy passed the tip of a thin red tongue over lips that were perhaps a little dry and said nothing. He did not deny Carr's accusation; he did not even look indignant at it. Carr went on, his voice a little deeper.

"I cannot punish you for your dastardly attempt to drown my wife, because I have no proof of it. But I want you to understand that I *know* of it, and that never again, in any circumstances, will I allow you to come near the manor, or to see or speak to any one belonging to me."

Jimmy's black eyes opened wide.

"I am not to come and see—Gay?"

"I'll give you the soundest horsewhipping ever you had in your life—if you do."

"But"—in plaintive objection—"I am ver' fond of little Gay."

For a moment Carr stared at him.

"You *devil*!" he said at last under his breath, and Jimmy's laugh, high pitched and to Carr's ear entirely diabolical, followed him as he strode away.

And Hilary thought her husband harsh and ungrateful in the extreme, and Gay once more lamented aloud the loss of his playfellow. Day by day Carr faced his alternatives—to tell the truth



or to endure as best he could Hilary's grieved disapproval. Why shouldn't he tell the truth, he asked himself sometimes. Hilary could hardly blame him more than she blamed him now. And then came the realization of what her awakening would be—her bitter sense of his duplicity, her terror at the peril that had hung over, and that would still hang over, herself and her children. No, he decided with a shudder, to tell Hilary was not the way out. It did not even remove the element of danger. The way out lay either in getting rid of Mr. Taw Sein Ko or in leaving his neighborhood.

So, with a pang at his heart stronger than he would have believed possible, he laid his plans for an early departure from the home he loved, in which Hilary and he had been so happy, the simple, but beautiful home among the hills where he had hoped to bring up his children and spend the warm evening of his days. He must sell Crossghyll Manor. Hilary must be told some well-concocted story of financial difficulties and a hurried retrenchment. She would, he knew, fall in with any plan he cared to make, if she thought he was in trouble, and though he hated to distress and deceive her, it seemed his only possible course. Once obtain Hilary's acquiescence and all might yet be well. He would carry off her and her babies and hide them somewhere where Mr. Taw Sein Ko should cease from troubling and he could be at rest. It was a drastic and heartbreaking plan, but it seemed the only one.

He was pondering the details, one golden morning, as he walked slowly through Crossghyll village, his hands in his pockets, his somber, troubled eyes on the ground. Anna, the nursemaid, had passed him a moment or two ago, with baby in her lace-hung pram and Gay running and shouting beside her. They were going to a farm on the other side of Crossghyll on some errand for

Hilary, and Gay had entreated his father to come with them. But at the moment his childish chatter had seemed unendurable. Carr had compromised by promising to meet them at the farm and walk back with his little son. He looked at his watch and quickened his pace. He must not keep them waiting too long.

Suddenly on the summer breeze came a sound—the thunder of horses' hoofs, the cries of shouting men. Carr lifted a startled head. Surely that was not the coach coming down from Durley Moss! The road from Durley Moss was steep and dangerous, with an ugly turn at the bottom, and the horses he could hear were evidently out of hand.

The thundering hoofs drew nearer. Even as he listened, there was a sickening crash, a confused and terrifying outcry, and then silence. Carr lowered his head and ran.

It was the coach coming down from Durley Moss. Something had startled the horses, and the steep hill, with the ugly turn at the bottom, had done the rest. When Carr came up, the coach lay over on its side, the roadway all scattered with splintered wood and broken glass. In front of it was a little crowd, its center a struggling heap of men and horses.

And where, where were baby and Gay and Anna, who must all three have been close to where it happened? A glance answered him. The pram was by the side of the road, empty, and crouched against the bank was Anna with baby in her arms. Flung high up on it was Gay, lamenting aloud. His shrill and terrified "Father! Father!" reached Carr where he stood. Carr gasped out a few words of thankfulness and pushed into the crowd.

For they were lifting something, some one, out from under the horses, some one whose hair, all dusted with gravel, was very black, whose hand, trailing helplessly in the road beside

him, was a grayish yellow; some one whose legs hung limp and horrible; some one whose lips, pale purple, were frothy and stained with blood. Jimmy! Carr stood turned to stone. As they carried him past, he opened his eyes and smiled.

"Gay—little Gay," he murmured. "He all right?"

Carr turned on the bruised and shaken driver, gingerly fingering a twisted arm.

"Did he *save* him?"

The driver looked at him. His lips were quivering, his face curiously mottled.

"Th' little lad? Yes. Th' horses wer' right on 'im. But for the furrin gentleman, he must ha' bin killed."

When Jimmy came to himself that night, Carr sat by his bedside. The doctor had done what he could, but that was little, for Jimmy's days were numbered. Torn by remorse, Carr sat by him. Even more present than his remorse was his fear. If Jimmy should die, die, and he, Carr, never know the truth!

But it is difficult to kill a Burman. Jimmy, with one side all crushed in and a lacerated lung, was not dying yet. In the cool, scented summer twilight he opened his eyes and looked at Carr. Carr's two big, warm hands closed over his slim, cold one. He dropped on his knees by the bedside.

"Jimmy," he said hoarsely, "how can I ever thank you?"

A little smile, the faint and plaintive ghost of his former smile, passed across Jimmy's smooth yellow face.

"Gay all right?" he asked faintly.

"Yes, thanks to you, Jimmy, only thanks to you! Jimmy"—his maddening uncertainty banishing even his gratitude—"can you answer one question, just one?"

Jimmy looked up at him. It seemed to Carr he acquiesced.

"Who *are* you?"

Jimmy said nothing. If he took in the sense of Carr's words, he lacked the strength to reply. Carr took his courage in both hands.

"Are you—my son?"

The words came with difficulty, desperate and low. He must know, he *must*, before Jimmy died. The black eyes blazed suddenly up into his; then, slowly, but quite perceptibly, Jimmy shook his head. In the agony of his repentance and relief, Carr leaned his forehead on the bedclothes and sobbed aloud.

"I thought," he said brokenly at last, "you were my son—and Ma Pan-byu's."

Jimmy smiled.

"Yes," he said faintly. "I know. I saw what you think—and I let you. It was right you to be punished—a little."

"*Punished!*"

"Yes, punished," repeated Jimmy, and though the words were barely breathed, they were quite unmistakable.

Carr was silent a little, gathering together his scattered ideas. Suddenly he broke out.

"Then if you are not my son, whose, in God's name, are you? How do you come to be here, to say the things you have said and do the things you have done?"

The gray shade deepened a little on Jimmy's face.

"It's—a long tale," he said faintly.

"And the doctor said you were not to talk!" in acute repentance.

Jimmy smiled.

"It makes no difference. I talk—if I can," he said. "No, I am not your son—or Ma Pan-byu's. Ma Pan-byu never had a child. I am Maung Taw Sein Ko, the son of Maung Poh See, headman of Mau-doung. You knew him. He has been in your house many times. But you did not know that he would have married Ma Pan-byu but for you. They were betrothed as children—and he loved her. But Ma Pan-byu would

go to Mandalay to school—and then you came. If you had been good to her, it would have been different—but you left her—and she died.”

“I sent for her! I swear I did!”

“That may be. It was said so. But it was too late. Ma Pan-byu was dead. And my father hated you. Always he hated you—even after he married another. He taught me always to hate all English—and most you. I was to be educated English, to come to England early and learn your ways. And then to find and punish—you.”

“Good God! And did you really take on this ghastly vendetta?”

“At first, yes. But after I came to England, I began to see more clear. Revenge it is—of the cad. No gentleman pays back. Besides, you had never done me any harm.”

“No, but you don’t seem always to have remembered it. You were fiend enough to set baby’s room afire.”

“I—*what?*”

“Didn’t you? Was it really a fire? Jimmy, you are a dying man. In God’s name, tell the truth!”

“I never! No, never!”

Carr gasped. The denial, childishly phrased as it was, was convincing.

“You arranged that Gay should be carried off, anyhow! You can’t deny that!”

“Gay! You think I would give Gay to the gypsies! You damn’ silly fool! Why, I ver’ fond of little Gay.”

In his excitement, he had raised himself a little. He fell back, coughing dangerously. Carr tended him, groaning aloud. Jimmy was shortening his last hours, he knew, by talking, and he was *letting* him. Yet he must know, he *must*! It was possible that the fire in baby’s room had been accidental, that Gay had wandered and the gypsies had found him even as they had said, without any prompting from Jimmy. But Hilary’s accident, that had been purposely arranged; he had seen it himself.

“You’d better be quiet,” he said grimly. “You’ll kill yourself if you don’t. I’d believe you, I would indeed, if it wasn’t for what happened—to my wife. You did that yourself. I saw you. If you did that on purpose, you did the other things, too.”

“And what about this morning?” It was a whisper, but distinct. “If I want little Gay to die, why I not let him die this morning?”

Carr passed a handkerchief over Jimmy’s damp forehead and stared at him in perplexity past words.

“You good fellow,” whispered Jimmy. “I never hated you, not even when you took Cynthia away from me. You jolly good fellow, always. You do one thing for me and I tell you—about Hilary.”

“I’ll do anything in the world for you. What is it?”

“Fetch—Cynthia.”

“My poor chap, Hilary has gone for her. She went at once,” returned Carr brokenly. “*She* doesn’t know you tried to drown her—”

“I didn’t. I never meant to drown her, only to frighten her a little—till she tell me where Cynthia is. I am good swimmer, and we not far out. I easy take her back when she has told me where is my Cynthia. But your lake water is cold, so cold I, too, will drown. Then I see you—and go quick for the shore. But I never mean Hilary to drown—no.”

Carr listened frowning and impressed, every conviction he had cherished, every conclusion at which he had during the past two months painfully arrived, shattered into atoms about him. Jimmy’s explanation was so plausible, so possible. He had seen the Burmese—men and women, too—upset their light and risky river craft for fun, over and over again, had seen them, in their mild and lucent waters, disport themselves like fishes by the hour together. Jimmy would be quite unpre-

pared for the icy chill of a Cumberland lake. He would see no reason why he should not carry out without difficulty his plan of saving Hilary when he had frightened her sufficiently for his purpose. It sounded like the truth.

"Do you—believe?"

One again Carr dropped on his knees by the bedside.

"Yes," he said huskily, "I can't help it. All the same"—his passionate anger surging up again—"you might have killed her."

"I know," agreed Jimmy softly. "But I did not mean to. No, never."

Death proved kinder to Jimmy than ever life would have been, for it gave him Cynthia. She came late that same evening, and the sight of her tears falling over him like summer rain, the thrill of her girlish lips on his pallid face, nerved him to ask for what in any other circumstances would have been the impossible.

"Cynthia, marry me," he urged. "Then you get all that is mine. It is the Burmese law."

"Oh, Jimmy, I won't marry you for that. I'll marry you for saving Gay," Cynthia told him, and neither Carr nor Hilary said her nay.

It was an odd little ceremony that took place beside Jimmy's bed, for the little bride still had her hair down her back and the bridegroom was dying. Jimmy rallied astonishingly after the ceremony; so surprising was his apparent recovery, so strong seemed his hold on life, that Carr and Hilary looked at each other, a fear neither of them dared acknowledge in their eyes.

But the flicker died out the more quickly that it had been so bright. The day came when even the remembrance that he had attained the height of his ambition and won an English wife could not rouse him to more than a smile. He died in Cynthia's arms, her childish kisses on his forehead, her

warm tears falling over him, and unquestionably he died happy.

Many a long vigil did Carr pass at his side, looking down with dimmed eyes at his smooth Mongolian face, still faintly lighted by its gentle smile. One problem faced him always: Should he or should he not tell Hilary what had been the nature of the bond between him and the dead man; the bond that, though it had existed only in his own imagination, had been too strong for him, even at her urgent entreaty, to break?

On the day when they buried Jimmy, Carr reached his decision. No, he would never tell. To tell the story of his early years would mean to shake Hilary's confidence in him and perhaps destroy her love. How, then, could either he or Hilary be happy? No, if by his own uncalled-for confession he shattered their happiness, the happiness Jimmy had given his life to preserve, then indeed poor Jimmy would have died in vain.

They buried him in the little green churchyard folded among the Cumberland hills, and Cynthia goes every day to put flowers on his grave. She looks pathetically childish in her widow's garb, for she is not yet seventeen, and she is just a little overwhelmed at the wealth with which Jimmy has dowered her, but she is beginning dimly to realize that her heart is not, as she thought at first, quite broken. Yet the kisses she leaves behind her on Jimmy's grave are fragrant with sincere affection, an affection he can never, now, do anything to lose.

Hilary and her husband come often, too, to look with gentle grief at the cross that marks his resting place. "In loving memory of Jimmy, who died July 16, 190—," they read. Underneath, in Burmese characters, stands: "Maund Taw Sein Ko." And again: "Greater love hath no man than this that he lay down his life for his friend."

# The Shoulders, Arms, *and* Hands

By Doctor Lillian Whitney

Dr. Whitney is always glad to answer all reasonable questions relating to beauty and health, but she cannot undertake to answer letters which fail to inclose a stamped, self-addressed envelope for reply, or to letters inclosing Canadian stamps. Every week she receives many letters of this sort, in spite of the notice always printed at the end of this department. Sometimes, even, the post office sends notification that letters are being held for her, which careless writers have posted with no stamp. If you have failed to receive a reply to your letter, you may know that it is for one of these three reasons.—EDITORS.

EVERY woman, even though she does not appear at social functions in décolleté gowns, takes pleasure in possessing beautifully rounded shoulders and arms of graceful proportions. These are dependent very largely upon a well-developed muscular system, which must be distinguished from fat. The grace, symmetry, mobility, flexibility, and smoothness of the body rely upon a harmonious development of the muscles. So in this region—particularly across from shoulder to shoulder and upon the upper arm—muscle must be enough in excess of bone to cover it, for a bony prominence here is extremely unattractive; as also are defective muscles, resulting in angularity, leanness, even emaciation, or the opposite condition, a grossness due to fat.

Good musculature tends toward a litheness and an elasticity that constitute beauty in themselves. For its perfect development daily systematic exercise is required. A splendid method of attaining roundness and symmetry of the shoulders is to shrug them; not aimlessly or in a languid fashion, but with purpose aforethought. The arms should be dropped down straight in front, with the hands clasped, all air being expelled from the lungs at the

same time. Now take a deep inhalation, forcibly raising the shoulders as high as possible. The breath should then be exhaled, while the shoulders are brought forward and around in a rotary motion. This is a very simple, but a remarkably successful, "all-round" exercise for reducing undue fat, burying bony prominences of shoulder and collar bone, and smoothing out the muscles.

Massage will facilitate muscular development, when it is properly given, that is, gently, with inunctions of warm oils. This also makes the skin white, smooth, and velvety. Deep-seated, forcible massage with astringents, on the other hand, will reduce excess of tissue.

The woman who owns an electric vibrator has at her command one of the best-known agents for producing pretty shoulders and arms. It is man's "machine-made" method for finding both health and beauty, and the popularity of electric vibrators is sufficient testimony that it is more than ordinarily efficient. A vibrator properly used has solved the beauty problem for hundreds of women.

Twisting the muscles upon the underlying bone, care being taken not to wound the skin, will also cause a breaking up of fatty deposits and a carrying away, in heightened blood and



lymph currents, of the waste accumulations. Strenuous sports, such as tennis, golf, rowing, and swimming, will do this, too, but every one has not the facilities or the inclination to indulge in them. These, of course, are forms of very active exercise, and, with the deep breathing of fresh air that they invite, exceed all other forms in developing the muscular system, especially of the shoulders and arms.

Frequently constitutional treatment must be combined with external measures to bring the faulty tissues into line.

Proper food for muscle building, slowly and thoroughly chewed to insure its complete digestion and assimilation, is as necessary as fresh air and exercise. Breathing with a view to expanding the chest and increasing the pulmonary circulation, combined with rhythmic exercises of the arms, has a splendid effect in rounding out the tissues, if persistently followed day after day. Purposeful walking, with deep breathing and arm swinging, is another excellent method for developing the upper body.

Massage is more effective when it follows a warm bath of the parts, thus facilitating the absorption of fattening oils, which should always be used. Massage must not be merely superficial. The muscles should be gently grasped and rolled under the fingers very deftly, with a view to increasing the blood supply in that situation. No amount of passive or active exercise will do a particle of good if the blood supply is not increased. That is the object of all exercise.

Massage also increases the number of red-blood corpuscles in the blood; so, with richer blood and an increased supply, improvement must follow if the movements are persisted in and given properly. They must begin at the hand and work up slowly and steadily toward the heart. Inunctions of warm cocoa butter are as good as anything;

some use olive oil or a combination of equal parts of olive oil, coconut butter, and lanolin. Mutton tallow, rendered lard, and beef suet are also extremely useful and are preferred for this purpose by many; either alone or combined with other fats, they make valuable emollients that can be applied for fattening purposes to any part of the body—the face as well. Here is a formula that can be changed by substituting other fats to suit individual preference:

White wax .....	2 ounces
Coconut oil .....	2 ounces
Mutton suet (or lanolin) .....	4 ounces
Benzoinated lard (or sweet-almond oil) .....	4 ounces

These fattening creams are all prepared in the same way—by melting the ingredients over a hot-water bath and beating them upon removal until they are cool and form a creamy mass. Perfume may be added to suit.

Camphor has the property of reducing tissue. By the way, it should never be advised for bust reduction, or used upon the bust for the rapid reduction of troublesome conditions in this situation during confinement, as it unfortunately frequently is. Those not familiar with its action suggest it again and again for bust reduction. If a woman is willing to have the mammary glands reduced, with complete atrophy of the parts, as happens in some instances, well and good; but most women do not desire so disastrous an occurrence, so this digression may be the means of sparing these highly important organs in many cases where camphor would otherwise be used.

Applied to fatty muscles, camphor is very beneficial; at the same time it has a whitening effect upon the skin. So a toilet cream that contains this valuable agent is an excellent thing to rub into the arms and shoulders when a reduction of these parts is desirable.

The following makes an excellent camphor toilet cream:

Quince seed .....½ ounce  
Water, hot .....28 ounces  
Borax, powder ..... 2 drams  
Glycerin ..... 4 ounces  
Spirit of camphor .... 2 ounces  
Oil of bitter almond..20 drops

Macerate the quince seed several hours with the water, stir frequently, strain, add the glycerin, and in the mixture dissolve the borax. Dissolve the oil in the spirit of camphor, gradually add it to the mucilage, and mix thoroughly. It can be used with equal success upon the face.

An unsightly condition of the skin of the arms is sometimes their only blemish. It may be red and roughened with pebbly elevations. The above cream will whiten it. The use of pumice—either stone or in powder form—or of sandy preparations, will transform the roughest skin, if persisted in. An occasional scrubbing will do little good. Sometimes a coarse-bristled bath brush or luffa mitts used daily with a good bland soap bring about surprising results. Any one can make a sandy preparation by using powdered pumice and ground almond meal, again as much of the meal as of the sand. Add enough glycerin to moisten it.

At this season of the year the arms are very apt to be unsightly from exposure to the elements during the long summer days, and it is then that a lotion for the removal of freckles and brown spots will be sought for eagerly. These discolorations do not appear in a day or a week; they are deposits of coloring matter produced by the combined action of sun and wind upon the skin.



The health and beauty of the nails is improved by polishing them.

Housekeepers who like to work with their sleeves rolled up usually develop these blemishes, too. An excellent mildly caustic lotion contains:

Salicylic acid .....60 grains  
Bay rum ..... 4 ounces

Mix and apply several times daily with absorbent cotton. If a slight roughness follows, use cold cream. Further treatment for tan, freckles, and sunburn can be had on proper application.

The need for a liquid powder that will adhere in warm weather, or in a warm room, is sometimes felt by those who hesitate to dress décolletage. The following is a good mixture and can be used on the face as well as on the arms, hands, and neck:

Rose water ..... 4 ounces  
Zinc oxide .....¼ ounce  
Tincture of benzoin.....10 drops

The tincture should be added drop by drop, after the zinc oxide has been dissolved in the rose water. Apply it with the hand or a soft handkerchief. Allow it to dry on, then gently remove all excess; otherwise it will look streaky.

A celebrated artist some years ago declared that American women are too nervous to have pretty hands. He made the remark on the occasion of being swept away by admiration for the exquisitely modeled, soft, pliant hands of one of his countrywomen. He pleaded for the privilege of reproducing them on canvas. The hands in question are further noteworthy for the reason that their owner is a woman of strong intellect and force, a public speaker and worker. She is an unexplainable exception to the rule, for American women are usually absorbed in weightier matters than the cultivation of idle luxuries, and their hands show stronger tendencies in consequence. Among women in the better classes of southern Europe, for instance, useless, soft, white hands, with perfectly manicured nails, are quite common. These women have not yet risen above the boredom and monotony of an existence the alpha and omega of which is personal indulgence; therefore their hands are as soft, as pretty, as dimpled, and as meaningless as an infant's.

The artist above mentioned has named the canvas in question "The Characterless Hand of a Woman of Character." Is not this a strange anomaly? It is all the more strange because the hand is regarded—by students of scientific physiognomy at least—as be-

ing more revealing than the face. One noted writer on the subject says: "In form, every hand is at once the indicator and the epitome of the body and brain to which it belongs."

There is no such thing as an aristocratic hand. Persons of the most exalted rank sometimes exhibit hands of a plebeian type. Beautiful hands are not confined to any particular walk of life. They are very often seen in the so-called "low born" and in out-of-the-way places, because to-day beauty has taken on new meanings. We no longer consider the soft, selfish, voluptuous hand attractive; whereas a hard, sinewy hand, expressive of bone and nerve, reveals fine and noble qualities and excites our admiration.

We can do little to alter the shape of the hand—whether it be long or short, broad or narrow. These qualities depend on the general physique, after which the hand should be patterned to be normal. An unusually large hand on a small body is almost a deformity, while a noticeably small hand on a large frame is an anomaly. There is a disease called "acromegaly," in which the

bones begin to increase in size at about puberty or early adult life, and the first symptoms are usually observed in the hands. This strange disease is associated in some way with that mysterious gland in the brain, the pituitary body. Some day we may have more to say about it.

The most beautiful hands will degenerate from lack of care, abuse, or neglect, just as homely hands can be wonderfully improved by daily persist-



Shrug the shoulders to develop all the surrounding structures



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## The Shoulders, Arms, and Hands

ent treatment and constant solicitude for their appearance. This is necessary when the hands are useful members and are called upon to perform a thousand and one maneuvers in the course of each day. Gloves should be worn for all work that has a tendency to coarsen them. It is not always easy to accustom oneself to this, but the effort of will is small compared to the benefits derived, as coarse work ruins the hands and nails beyond all repair. Even subsequent care can never completely restore a hand that has been made gross through years of neglect.

The general physical condition affects the hands more markedly than any other part of the body. When the circulation is poor, they are cold, sometimes clammy. There is then a lack of nourishment in the parts, and they become scrawny. They wrinkle, too, sooner than the face, and age more quickly. A young hand is a very desirable and commendable possession as real age comes on and is, besides, one that can be compassed by anybody who admires this most unique feature in all nature—the human hand.

It should be every woman's pride to possess refined hands. These she can cultivate by anointing them frequently during the day, and always at bedtime, with olive oil, which keeps the skin soft, healthy, and free from blemishes. When gloves are worn for household tasks, it is much easier to preserve the youth of the hands, for water roughens and dries out the natural oils of the skin. If gloves are not worn, a lotion that has a softening effect upon the cuticle must be in constant use. A formula for this has frequently been given in these pages.

Prepared suet is superior to any other fat for use upon hands that have been coarsened by toil and exposure to the elements. It is made as follows: Melt the fresh suet over a slow fire. While the suet is fluid, add from ten

to thirty grains of gum camphor to every ounce of suet. After they have been thoroughly mixed, remove from the fire and beat up the whole well. The addition of an ounce of rose ointment to an ounce of prepared suet makes a more "elegant" salve. For cracks and fissures of hands—or feet or lips—the addition of thirty grains each of salicylic acid and sublimed sulphur gives one a preparation of marked value.

Redness of the hands is an annoying complaint. In such cases, the general health needs some corrective. All tight bands and constriction of clothing anywhere—especially in the sleeves—should be avoided. A lotion that is recommended for redness of the skin, sunburn, and chafing, contains:

Powdered carbonate of zinc.....	4 drams
Powdered carbonate of magnesia..	½ dram
Lime water .....	4 ounces
Glycerin .....	1 ounce
Distilled witch-hazel water.....	1 ounce

No hand, however well preserved, looks well if the nails are neglected. Rough treatment does much to injure their beauty, too. White spots on the nails are now thought to be due to the presence of gas in the substance of the nail, perhaps caused by reckless habits of using the hands. Some manicures contend that injury to the base of the nail, caused by futile efforts at pushing down the cuticle to expose the crescents, results in these spots. All nails do not show the crescents conspicuously; more is said of them than is at all necessary. Daily attention to prevent the cuticle from growing up on the nail is sufficient. Trimming with scissors and pushing it back forcibly thicken the tissues at the base of the nail and make it unsightly. The nails should be filed once a week and should conform to the shape of the finger tip. Polishing daily with a good paste keeps them free from ridges and brittleness. Here is one:





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## Smith's Magazine

### ROSE PASTE FOR FINGER NAILS.

Spermaceti .....	1½ ounces
White wax .....	9 drams
Oil of sweet almonds.....	12 ounces
Alkanet root .....	2 ounces
Oil of rose.....	3 drops

Formulas for cosmetic glove paste, whitening lotions, and so forth, will be given upon proper application.

### Answers to Queries

**ADMIRER.**—It would give me great pleasure to help you. Neurasthenia and a chronic "run-down" condition are now attributed to a lack, in the system, of the proper amount of tonic and regulating principles given out by the ductless glands. The newer treatment is by a combination of the elements of these glands. I will gladly answer a personal letter.

**OLD MAN.**—Is it indeed true that your "silvery locks" bar you from an occupation? If you must color them, do not use a dye, but try a restorer consisting of sage, tar, and iron, the formula for which will be sent on proper application.

**MRS. TAYLOR.**—Why not take advantage of cucumber time? This is the season when cosmetics containing fresh cucumber juice should be made. They are very valuable beautifying agents because of the arsenic in cucumbers, but will not "keep" unless the juice is properly made. A self-addressed, stamped envelope will bring directions to you.

**TOILER.**—It is embarrassing to present oneself, even in the circle of one's intimate friends, with stained hands. Try this powder:

White castile soap, powder.....	5 ounces
Pumice, powder .....	½ ounce
Kaolin .....	7½ ounces
Sodium perborate .....	3½ ounces

This is an excellent cleanser and bleacher.

**EXPRESS.**—Troubles of the digestion are legion, most of them being due to rapid eating and errors in diet. The origin of cancer is still a moot question, but many investigators believe our food to be chiefly responsible. The functional activity of the digestive organs can be reinforced by fer-

ments obtained from the digestive juices of animals; this not only relieves these organs of much work and so strengthens them, but the entire act of digestion is performed in an absolutely healthy manner. Can you see what these newer forms of treatment mean to the health of the community?

**R. S. T.**—Yes, there is a preparation called "Rose Sympathique." A simplified version of it can be made as follows:

Lard .....	4 ounces
Alloxan .....	1 dram
Oil of orris, liquid .....	20 drops
White petrolatum .....	4 ounces

Melt the fats, rub the alloxan with the mixture, and incorporate the oil. The cream will be white. Rub it lightly upon the skin and the atmosphere will cause the anointed parts to turn reddish.

**HULDA.**—Any astringent face lotion or toilet vinegar will reduce enlarged pores, refine the skin, and harden the tissues. Formulas can be had on proper application.

**JACK.**—The hair "regenerator" you refer to contains *lead acetate*. Therefore it is a dangerous hair dye.

**MRS. E.**—Unless nits are destroyed, the child is likely to have fresh outbreaks of head vermin, despite frequent washing. To remove nits, shampoo the hair first in the usual way, then soak it thoroughly with,

Fluid extract of stave sacre.....	1 ounce
Diluted acetic acid .....	15 ounces

Mix and filter.

**M. V.**—There is nothing more repellent than an objectionable body odor, especially a fetor of the breath. Space forbids me to enter fully into the causes that may bring this about. An article upon the subject appeared in this department some time ago. I urge you to send for a copy and study it carefully. If your teeth, nose, and throat are healthy, then the trouble probably arises from your intestinal tract. Sip a goblet of hot water on arising, and use a liver and intestinal tonic laxative. The name of one will gladly be furnished.

**ALMA J.**—Note what has been said to M. V. Here is an excellent mouth wash, which can also be used in a nose and throat douche.

Permanganate of potash .....	5 grains
Distilled water .....	1 ounce

Doctor Whitney will be glad to answer, free of charge, all reasonable questions relating to beauty and health. Private replies will be sent to those inclosing a self-addressed, stamped envelope. Do not send Canadian stamps or coins. Address: Beauty Department, SMITH'S MAGAZINE, 79 Seventh Avenue, New York.

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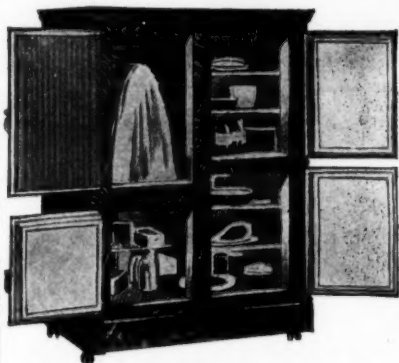
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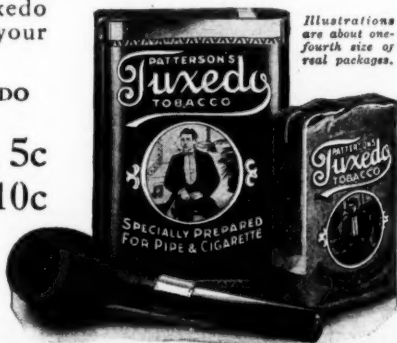
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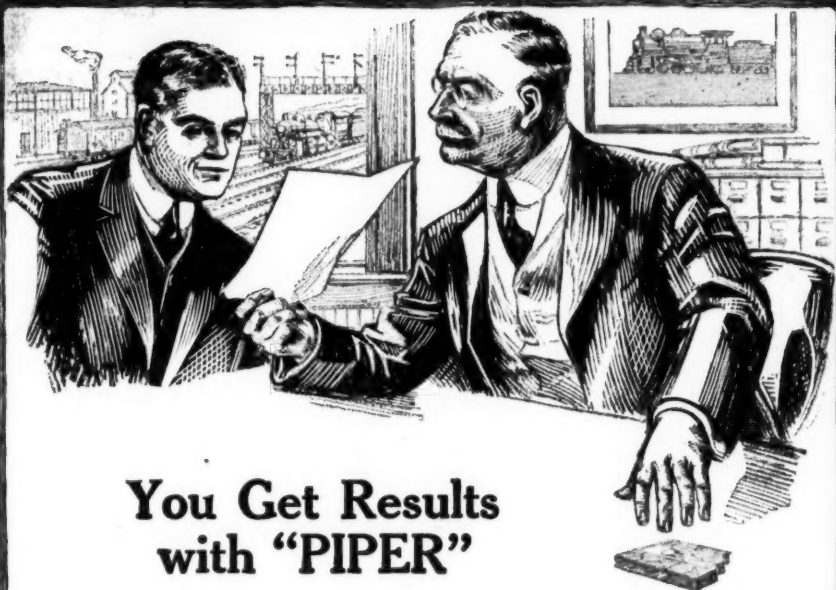
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